

# INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING GUIDE

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## Content

Introduction .....	4
1. Peculiarities of Individual Consulting.....	5
1.1. The concept and goals of individual consulting .....	5
1.2. Consulting stages.....	8
1.3. Roles, functions and ethical principles of the consultant .....	13
1.4. Consulting models and strategies .....	17
1.5. Conditions for successful individual consulting .....	20
1.6. Consulting methods.....	31
1.7. Time management .....	39
Used literature.....	45
Recommended literature .....	46
2. Guide for Preparation and Defence of Final Master Thesis .....	47
2.1. Formal requirements of Master thesis.....	47
2.1.1. Mission of Master thesis.....	47
2.1.2. Selection of Master thesis topic.....	51
2.1.3. Planning of Master thesis.....	53
2.1.4. Requirements of academic honesty.....	54
2.1.5. Structure of Master thesis .....	56
2.2. Content of Master thesis .....	59
2.2.1. Introduction.....	59
2.2.2. Theoretical part .....	64
2.2.3. Methodology .....	72
2.2.4. Empirical part.....	75
2.2.5. Conclusions and recommendations .....	80
2.3. Defence and assessment of Master thesis .....	80
2.3.1. Preparation for Master thesis presentation .....	80
2.3.2. Defence of Master thesis .....	82
Used literature.....	85
Recommended literature.....	85
Annexes .....	89

## Introduction

This guidebook is prepared for students who are writing their Master thesis, their supervisors and consultants.

In the first part of the guidebook, Master thesis' supervisors and consultants will find analysis of main characteristics of individual consultations: notion, models and strategies, roles of consultants, structure of consultation process, time management. Recommendations for successful consultations, provided questions and tasks at the end of each chapter will help to organize individual students' work and to plan effective consultations.

The second part describes formal requirements, structure and process of Master thesis. Questions and tasks at the end of each chapter will help students to write their Master thesis constantly and consistently, according to formal requirements of the University and Programme committee.

We believe that this guidebook will ensure Professional development of students, will help to monitor writing process of Master thesis.

# 1. Peculiarities of Individual Consulting



## 1.1. The concept and goals of individual consulting

Many definitions are employed to define consulting. Most often consulting is defined as the sum total of measures allowing to choose the best solution, method or securing the making of the best solution. Other authors define consulting as professional advice, recommendations and explanations provided to the person by the specialist or the dedication of time, attention and honour to another person or persons who temporarily are in the role of the client. Consulting is also treated as a method helping people to understand and solve their problems effectively.

Scientists underline that the role of consulting is to provide a man with an ability to regulate his development himself, solve specific problems that have become the sources of difficulties. That means that a person needs to be taught to realize his own self better in order that he would be able to take responsibility.

A good consulting is determined by the positive psychological disposition of a person, because when the person feels good psychologically his behaviour is not determined by his emotions, he is able to overcome difficulties, tolerates himself, has a sense of self-esteem and enjoys everyday life. A good disposition to receive other people means that a man likes other people and their interests as his own, enjoys communication, respects those differences that are noticed by people, likes to feel being a part of the group, feels commitment towards neighbours and other people around him. The ability to accept life's requirements means that a man undertakes to solve those problems that arise in his life path, is not afraid of the future, creates plans about it, encounters new ideas and experience favourably, uses his abilities, sets realistic goals, is able to make decisions and makes efforts to realize those decisions in such a way that it would be felt.

All consulting activity is based on a complex concept of a man, which covers the general life situation of the consulted person. Due to the fact that every trainee has his own individual learning plan, he needs an individual consulting. The goal of consulting is that every person consulted would be able to direct himself in the right direction.

Consulting method is one of the methods of work with an individual, therefore, the consultant has to have theoretical knowledge and practical skills, experience, respect for ethical principles: when communicating and advising, he has to be not annoying, not to demonstrate that he is a top level leader or create the image of an expert.

It should be noted that the goals of consulting depend on the needs of a client. Several major goals of individual consulting distinguished in the scientific literature are as follows:

- To help a man to reveal himself and cultivate the sense of self-respect and self-esteem. This sense is necessary in order that a man would be able to strengthen his maturity of personality. Every man must detect self-worth in himself, then it is easier to perceive that everyone who he meets is worth respecting, and it significantly facilitates even very complicated interpersonal relationships.
- To help a man to continually know himself better. Self-knowledge is very important, because sometimes people hide the truth about themselves from themselves, or are not able to penetrate to the truth.

It should be noted that a student must map out his learning process himself. He has to take responsibility for his learning. Although a university teacher must not forget that a student has his own learning style, every student has different learning abilities. However, the student and the university teacher are equal partners.

The main principles of individual consulting are linked to:

1. Individuality. Every man is a personality and expresses his feelings and difficulties differently, looks for a variety of ways to exit a difficult situation.
2. Empathy. When experiencing difficulties, every man reacts to induced failures in his own way. That means that there is a need not only to understand experiences of a man logically and rationally, but also to feel their reality and show it to him.
3. Trust towards a man. To help the student to choose a possible solution for his present situation. When discussing the direction chosen by him, it is necessary to search for real ways and opportunities to improve his situation, because a man finds it difficult to accept an opinion that was forced on him against his will.
4. Non-judgement and non-condemnation. It is important for the university teacher to deeply understand the student without judging

and condemning him, even if he has encountered personally unacceptable problems. The goal of a university teacher is to understand and get the feeling of the difficulties of the experiences of a man and look for possible ways out.

5. Accepting the man as he is. We continually encounter the things which we like or dislike, which are beautiful or not beautiful to us and so on. In the process of consulting, it is important to know and understand a man, his experiences, his relationship with the surrounding environment. Then, it is possible to accept the man, who needs assistance, as he is. And only if this principle is applied, we can hope to find an appropriate way to help him.
6. Recognition of the self-determination of a man. As it has been already mentioned, it is important to help the man to express what his most difficult experiences are and what he would seek and how he would like to find an acceptable way out to himself.



**Remember that:**

*The main tasks of yourself as a consulting university teacher are:*

- *To initiate mutual information exchange*
- *To listen to the student and provide the support he needs*
- *To explain the university regulations*
- *To encourage the student himself to set goals and assess the results of the activity which was meant to achieve results*
- *To help identify needs and help understand them*
- *To discuss the objectives pursued and, as far as practicable, help implement them*
- *To encourage the consulted person to take responsibility for his goals*
- *To provide feedback*



**Questions and tasks**

1. Discuss the following questions together with the student:
  - a. What expectations does the student have towards the university teacher?



- b. What expectations do you as the university teacher have towards the student?
- c. What is the ideal model of the consultant?
- d. What consultant's tasks seem as the most important to the student?
- e. How can you implement the following tasks together (Table 1):

Table 1. Tasks implementation: student's and teacher's views

Task	Student's commitment	University teacher's commitment
To exchange information		
To implement the set goals		
To discuss the results		



## 1.2. Consulting stages

In order to achieve effective assistance, it is important to know the structure of consulting process. The effectiveness of consulting also distinguishes itself by the way of how effectively and systematically this process will be accomplished. The structure of consulting process is defined by various authors differently.

When generalizing the perspectives of various authors regarding individual consulting, the process is divided into five stages: *the preparation for consulting; an introduction; the identification of the need and problem; the exploration of the problem and need and solution making; the activity; feedback.* *The same stages also apply regarding the process of Master's thesis preparation.*

**The preparation for consulting.** Before a meeting, if it is possible, the consultant prepares/develops an appropriate consultations plan and/or schedule.

**Introduction.** It is the first meeting to which both the consultant and the consulted person come with their peculiar approach towards environment, activity, mutual understanding, etc. It is very important for the consultant to understand at this stage what experience, abilities, motivation and attitude towards learning the consulted person has. It is also very important for the consulted person to find out at this stage what form the cooperation with

him will take, whether his needs will be taken into consideration, whether the consultant has a sufficient competence, etc. At this stage, everyone communicates using speech and manner characteristics to them.

This is aimed at creating appropriate relationships which will allow to reveal the client's thoughts and feelings and find out the structure of assistance. Appropriate relationships are created even before an introductory conversation. The consulted person must feel that he will take an active role in the process of consultation, that when solving the examined question much depends on him. An introductory conversation allows to develop the plan for the course of consulting.

The second stage is *the identification of the need and problem*. At this stage, the consulted person is introduced to questions and difficulties/problems arising to him. At this stage, the consultant and the consulted person help contact and develop mutual trust; the consultant tries to be sincere, authentic, empathic, caring, non-evaluating; he reacts to the consulted person in such a way that it would encourage the latter to explore his problems deeper; he notes feelings, nonverbal reactions and the content of his utterances. It should be noted that, in order to describe a problem/need of the consulted person precisely by noting his emotional and cognitive aspects, the consultant specifies a problem/need until both the consultant and the client understand it equally; it is defined by precise and specific definitions.

People can act intellectually in many new or difficult situations, however, their actions are not sufficiently effective. The value of the application of programmed decisions in those areas where special programs and procedures can be applied is, apparently, quite great, and an organization has to try to program as many decisions as possible. Traditional programmed decision making techniques are the following: habits encompassing knowledge and skills, routine office operations and standard work procedures, and also an organizational structure and culture, i.e. the system of general expectations, well-organized information channels, established lower level goals, etc. Traditional programmed problem solving methods are based on the selection and training of staff, featuring quick-wittedness, intuition and creative approach.

*In order to perform a systematic analysis of the problem, it is necessary:*

- to find out why the problem has arisen and whether another fundamental problem, which should be solved firstly, does not hide behind it;

- to find out how the problem expresses itself, in order to understand whether it is not only a part of mutually related problems which cannot be solved separately;
- to collect additional information if it helps to clarify the problem.

***The exploration of the problem and need.*** At this stage, all the possible alternatives of solutions to problems or needs are put forward and discussed openly. The consultant encourages the consulted person to identify all the possible options which he thinks are appropriate and real. To this end, he uses open ended-questions and helps put forward additional alternatives which the consulted person would be able to accept, but without imposing his solutions. While talking, it is possible to note possible options. Then it is easier to compare them.

***Solution making.*** At this stage, the alternatives of a problem solution are critically evaluated. The consultant helps decide which of them are appropriate and realistic. A realistic plan to solve the problem is developed, the consulted person is helped to understand that not all the problems can be solved. The plan of the problem solution has to foresee what tools and methods will be used by the client to verify the realisticness and possibilities of the chosen alternatives of the solution.

***Activity.*** At this stage, the plan of the problem solution is consistently realized. The consultant assists the consulted person to decide what needs to be accomplished in the light of realisticness, time, emotional possibilities and needs, and also to understand that when attaining the goal failures are possible, that a partial success or even a failure is not a catastrophe – it is important to take a risk and keep trying to realize the plan of the problem solution.



• ***Think about the following aspects while getting ready for your first consultation:***

- *What scientific conferences can you recommend to him to participate in based on the study programme of the student?*
- *How will you communicate with the student?*
- *How regularly will you meet with the student for a scientific discussion?*
- *How much time can you allot for a scientific discussion with the student?*

***During the first meetings with the student it is recommended to discuss the following:***

- *Experience gained by the student in the chosen subject*

- *Your interests in the subject of the student*
- *What alternative optional subjects in the studies programme you recommend to the student to choose*
- *What the plan for individual consulting is*
- *What Master's thesis is regarded as excellent*
- *What the plan for Master's thesis preparation is*
- *What main scientific sources of the analysed subject are*
- *What useful conferences on the researched subject are recommended*

*During other meetings, consider the following:*

- *Discuss the implementation of the objectives set during the previous meetings*
- *Successes and failures of the implementation of the objectives*
- *If any questions and/or problems should arise to the student, identify the problems, analyse them and make solutions*

Table 2. The stages of consulting and the most important characteristics of the stages of consulting

The stage of consulting	The most important characteristics of the stage
Preparation for consultation. Introduction	Learner
Need and problem identification	Problem
Problem and need exploration	Problem
Decision making	Strategy
Activity	Quality Learner
Assessment and feedback	Quality Learner

***Assessment and feedback.*** At this stage, the client, together with the consultant, assesses the level of his goal achievement while having regard to the needs of the client and generalizes the achieved results.

Table 2 presents consultation stages and what has to be the main focus of the consultant during a consultation.



## Questions and tasks

1. Discuss and develop the schedule of individual consultations with the student.
2. Discuss together with the student what features that assist to implement the foreseen objectives he has. What personal shortcomings of his can he identify?
3. Discuss what your goals for studying are (Table 3):

**Table 3. My goals for studying**

<b>My goal which I want to achieve in the upcoming months</b>		
What do you want in particular?		
How does it have to come to pass?		
What will change?		
How will I know I am on the right track?		
What will I need for the implementation?		
Who will support me?		

4. What is experience gained in the subject chosen by the student?
5. Is the subject related to the areas of your scientific research? How?
6. What alternative optional subjects would you recommend to the student in his studies programme?
7. What is the plan for Master's thesis preparation?
8. Try to plan the changes together by filling in the changes table.
9. What seems to you as the most important? What essential topics would you single out? What most important questions arise (Table 4)?

**Table 4. Questions for planning changes**

<b>What do you want to achieve?</b>	<b>What things you do not want anymore?</b>
1. What do you want to start doing?	1. What irritates, troubles you and causes your discontent?
2. What do you want to stop doing?	2. What situations are changeable?
3. What do you want to change?	
4. What has to be different?	

<b>What are possible risks?</b> 1. What is the worst thing that could happen while implementing the changes? 2. What are possible risks? 3. What is their influence?	<b>What limits you and what encourages?</b> 1. What are the things that hinder you? 2. What things help you? 3. What stops you? 4. What encourages you?
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### 1.3. Roles, functions and ethical principles of the consultant

Based on the most important consulting tasks, it is possible to highlight six functions of consulting: advice, calming, communication, emotional relief, highlighting of thinking and reorientation. *Advice* is understood as the telling of what a man, in the opinion of the consultant, should do. *Calming* is described as encouragement for a man who is encountering a particular problem. *Communication* is understood as understanding a man and supply of information that is needed. *Emotional relief* is defined as assistance to a person to get mentally relieved. Encouragement to think rationally is *highlighting of thinking*. Rerorientation is related to encouragement for inner changes.

While consulting, the university teacher performs a very important activity – he cooperates with the person consulted by him. Cooperation is possible only when there is total respect and understanding.

Several consultant roles are generally discussed in the scientific literature (Table 5).

That means that the consultant needs reflexivity and questioning skills that help analyse the problem which has emerged. In addition, active listening skills, ability to see the other person's point of view and express the heard information by paraphrasing it, and ability to generalize utterances are necessary. To conclude, it could be said that reflection, understanding, summarising and emotional support and encouragement skills are necessary.

By the way, some scientists underline that the role of the consultant depends in a great measure upon the motivation and competence of the consulted person.

**Table 5. Consultant roles**

<b>Role</b>	<b>Description</b>
Disseminator of experience	He shares his experience intelligibly and sincerely.
Critical friend	Feedback about the activity of the consulted person is given fairly, objectively and openly.
Listener	Careful and empathic listening is provided to the consulted person
Consultant	Active listening and questioning methods are employed in order that the person under his patronage himself would solve and analyse the problems that have emerged.
Adviser	Assistance in planning professional and personal development.
Instructor	Assistance in changing the behaviour that is needed to implement set goals.

When the consulted person lacks knowledge and professional competence in the consulted area, however, the consulted person is motivated (is self-confident and wants to improve) – the most appropriate is an indicative role of the consultant: to be controlling, formal and giving clear instructions.

When the consulted person lacks knowledge and professional competence in the consulted area, and he is not motivated, the most appropriate is a persuasive role of the consultant: to talk into, explain the agreement and give a reason to work.

When the consulted person has knowledge and competence to accomplish a task, however, he does not have too great a desire to work, lacks self-confidence, then the most appropriate is a participating role: encouraging, supportive; discussing facts and ideas together.

When the consulted person has knowledge and competence and is motivated, it is sufficient to give full responsibility for all his activities to him.

However, the most important goal of a professional consultant activity is the well-being of the consulted persons with whom he works.

When consulting students, ethical rules shall apply: responsibility to the consulted person, professional competence and decency and responsibility to his colleagues.

*Responsibility to the consulted person.* The consultant works in the interest of his clients and has to respect their rights. Therefore, as it has been already mentioned, he cannot refuse to provide assistance due to motives related to nationality, race, confession, culture or sexual orientation. The quality of his services has to conform to the established consulting standards. The consultant must not exceed his powers and decide instead of the client. Relationships with the client have to continue until they are useful to the consulted person.

*Professional competence and decency.* The consultant has to conform to professional standards and raise his qualifications. Having encountered with personal problems or conflicts that hinder consulting, he has to seek the assistance of a supervisor or a colleague. He must not try to solve problems that exceed his professional possibilities.

*Responsibility to the taught people, collaborators, colleagues.* He is recommended to avoid personal and professional relationships with the same person. He should not consult learners, collaborators, colleagues and the supervised. His relationships with the supervised have to be confidential.

It is not unusual for ethical dilemmas to arise in the consulting practice. In the scientific literature, concepts of “problems” and “dilemmas” are understood and used synonymously, as if having the same meaning. In the scientific literature, an ethical problem is defined as a situation (or opportunity) that requires an individual to choose one decision out of a few which can be assessed as correct or incorrect, moral or immoral, whereas a *dilemma* is understood as a condition when it is necessary to choose one of two possibilities (<http://www.zodynas.lk/>). Dilemma is a problem, alternative, situation and reasoning the premises which consist of implication and disjunctive propositions. An ethical dilemma is a conflict situation arising between moral, material, or other *values*.

Value conflicts arise when a man has to behave according to value systems which are unacceptable to him. Values cannot be proven, they are what is desirable, define to what a priority is given. They cover perception about desirable human behaviour and assistance methods.

Oftentimes situations emerge, the solution of which to one person is technical, something that is done by mechanical application of rules, to the other it can cause a big ethical issue, where a solution is complicated, but clear, whereas to the third one it cannot even become a dilemma (when it seems that there is no solution). How all that is identified depends on a particular person:



on how he sees a situation, what experience he has accumulated in making solutions, and what his personal ethical principles are.

In case an ethical dilemma emerges, scientists advise to be guided by the following way of finding the solution to an ethical dilemma:

- Identify what has caused an ethical dilemma;
- Review the ethical code (ethical principles established by your institution) one more time;
- Get the consultation of your colleagues regarding the ethical dilemma that has emerged;
- Consider possible solutions to the ethical dilemma;
- Discuss it with the consulted person;
- Make solution together.



**Remember that:**

*As a university teacher-consultant, you:*

- *Communicate honestly and express respect for the rights and dignity of all the people.*
- *Respect cultural and individual differences of students related to their age, sex, race, ethnic origin, confession, sexual orientation, disability, social and economic status.*
- *Delve into the inner world of your student, however, maintain relationships of professional manner.*
- *Inform your student about your work possibilities, do not create image that you will provide a greater assistance than you are able.*
- *Seek that the student would understand the goals and nature of consulting and methods employed by the consultant and foreseen length of the communication.*



**Questions and tasks**

1. Discuss together with the student what ethical dilemmas you have encountered in your practice. How did you solve them?
2. Discuss together with the student ethical issues related to Master's thesis preparation.

3. What should your role be in the following situation, bearing in mind that you are a university teacher?

“This is a first year student who evaluates his studies very enthusiastically, however, he performs the tasks that were discussed with him very sloppily”.

“The student consulted by you greatly lacks self-confidence, constantly has doubts regarding decisions he has made, however, his task performance is responsible and of high quality”.



#### **1.4. Consulting models and strategies**

Most often three consulting models are presented in the scientific literature: evaluation, collegial and mentorship.

*Evaluation model* mostly emphasizes evaluation. When consulting, most of the time is devoted to the context of the conversation with the learner and observation of the activity (if it is necessary). Most often this model is applied after a particular activity (e.g., scientific practice) when it is talked with the consulted person what has been successful and what has gone wrong. The plan of scientific activity is also adjusted (if it needs to be).

The exceptionality of *collegial consulting model* lies in the fact that conversation questions are provided for by the consulted person himself. It is most effective especially in the very beginning of consultations when the student clarifies his needs, possibilities, etc., by asking the consultant questions.

When *mentorship model* is applied, an effort is made to reduce the effect of negative emotions and create the safest possible environment. The point is that the consultant integrates reflection into all the stages.

It is difficult to distinguish one of the models in practice, therefore, most often a mixed model dominates. One of the main premises is that the consulted person and the consultant are open and cooperating persons.

The consultations for students are most often based on the following strategies:

- o Leadership;
- o Reflexive consulting;
- o Learning through experience;

- o Learning through activity;
- o Partnerships.

The strategy of *learning through leadership* is understood as the student's relying on the experience of the university teacher, and advice based on the practical theory encourages students to act and reason rationally. Thus, the student can avoid quite a few mistakes. At this time, the consultant often becomes an authority, because he knows the methods of consultancy support provision. When formulating objectives in a clear and understandable to the student manner, he seeks that the implementation of those objectives would be easily assessable. The university teacher is active in this strategy, his task is to assess the progress of the student. The content of conversations is most often focused on problems and tasks that are being solved. Most often the student relies on the practical recommendations of the university teacher. In the educational aspect, such strategy means that indications how to think and act are given, the university teacher advises on the basis of his knowledge and values.

The main features are the following:

- The consultant is an active subject;
- The consultant is an adviser – he chooses a topic for the conversation;
- The consultant is an adviser responsible for the content, course, progress of a consultation, effectiveness of learning and that the consulted person would become an advanced student, etc.

*Reflexive consulting.* The consultant and the consulted person think several moves ahead, consider various possibilities. This consulting resembles intellectual discussion, in which various alternatives and their probability are explored not necessarily in order to establish the applicability of one of them. Argumentation, search for alternatives promote creativity, broaden the horizons of abstract thinking. The consultant also assesses the social environment, which is assessed analytically. When consulting reflexively, an attempt is not made to create a safe environment, but that the environment would be provocative, the learner is encouraged to look for alternatives and consider their consequences. The consultant encourages discursive thinking: upon hearing a correct answer, he is not satisfied by it and encourages further search – maybe there are other correct answers, maybe it is possible to restructure knowledge.

Thus, the activity of the university teacher in the reflexive consulting is not of a leading manner. Most of the attention is devoted to analysis,

reflections, discussion, identification of various peculiarities. The university teacher listens to the student and asks him questions encouraging his professional development. During a consultation, metacognitive processes and dialogues are emphasized.

When applying *the strategy of learning through activity*, the student himself sets his clear learning objectives, selects information by applying the chosen strategy. Most importantly, it is necessary to allow the student himself to draw conclusions and accumulate knowledge by reflecting on it. Learning through activity creates prerequisites for successive professional development, because during such learning concrete professional experience is acquired, observation and reflection take place. By choosing this strategy, the consultant believes in the ability of the learner to learn through activity:

- The learner is assisted in learning through discovery and remembering what has already been learned;
- The consultant is concerned both about the content and experiences of the learner;
- The consultant relies on observation, his main task is to be a mirror for another person. The consultant says what he saw and heard, but not what he had expected that the consulted person would do.

*The strategy of learning through activity* provides the student himself with an opportunity to be interested. The university teacher allows the student to accumulate information himself based on his actions. The main task of the university teacher is organizing the activity in order that it would be interesting, whereas later the student is encouraged to reflect on the activity performed by him. Thus, especially great significance is attached to experiments and the application of information in the experience.

In *partnership strategy*, the most important thing is to help the client improve in such a way as he wants it. Relationships have to be based on cooperation. The most important thing in these relationships is not results or their effectiveness, but meaningful learning. The main features of the strategy are:

- The knowledge about the experience of the consulted person;
- The activeness of the consultant and the client;
- It is expected that the consulted person will explore himself;
- During a consultation, much time is devoted to both the process and the content;

- Safe environment is necessary for consulting;
- The atmosphere of mutual trust and understanding and respect is created.

Some scientists (Jovaiša, 2009) distinguish a few types of consultations. The most important of them are the following: informative consultation, choice consultation, reorientative consultation, desensitization consultation, suitability consultation, support consultation, self-awareness consultation, planning consultation.

*Informative consultation* is the most often occurring type of consultations. It is based on the supply of various information on professional and scientific topics.

*Selection consultation* is used to advise about theme selection, subjects, etc.

*Reorientative consultation* is used when there is a need to reorient and change the personality's approach, resolution, decision and actions, teach how to think differently and make adequate decisions.

*Desensitization consultation* is needed when an individual experiences a great emotional tension: fear, apathy.

*Suitability consultation* is meant to assist an individual by giving him a response whether he is suitable for the chosen activity. Its most important objective is to identify his emotional peculiarities.

*Support consultation* is the supply of an additional information helping to prove that the client's decisions are correct. It is social support.

*Self-awareness consultation* is consulting for a person who finds himself in the new environment by assisting him in adapting and *orienting* or helping a person to make his mind up.

*Planning consultation* is assistance in creating future plans.



## 1.5. Conditions for successful individual consulting

An individual consultation is the conversation between two persons in a private manner. If the consulted person trusts the consultant as a person and specialist, such the feeling of privacy will be experienced. Thus, only the trust to the consultant can guarantee sincere mutual communication.

Another condition for successful consultation is a comprehensive knowledge about the consulted person. In order to know the consulted person, to the extent possible, his individuality should be explored. Possible methods to know him during a consultation are the following: observation, utterances of the consulted person. During the observation, the consultant observes whether the behaviour of the consulted person corresponds with his age, education, language, how he expresses his thoughts, what his vocabulary is. The most important source of information is the utterances of the consulted person: they help the consultant interpret facts, motivation, features of character, etc.

During a consultation, difficulties can arise due to simple, but very important reasons: lack of information, inability to make his mind up, inadequacy of goals and possibilities, lack of interests and values, poor self-dependence, lack of positive experience and insufficiency of self-expression.

**Methods of individual consulting.** The goal of all the consulting methods is to help the client solve the problem. No wonder that due to a wide spectrum of problems consultants are forced to apply various methods and combine them professionally. In the scientific literature, most often 9 main consulting methods are distinguished: question asking, encouragement and calming, reflection of content: paraphrasing and generalization, reflection of feelings and generalization, silent pauses, information supply, interpretation, confrontation, feelings of the consultant and disclosure, structuralization of consulting. Very often methods in the literature are treated as consulting skills. Nelson-Jones (2005) **considers listening and comprehension** as the key skills. If they are combined together, it can be considered as active listening, because effective listening is understood not as a technical hearing, not as a client's monologue, but as the dialogue, equal communication which requires emotional involvement of the consultant, thinking and searching for a solution. The main goal of this method is to learn about the client and encourage his self-analysis. Thus, taking into consideration the methods of Jones-Nelson, it can be maintained that he emphasizes the interaction between the consultant and the client more. Active listening has to be considered as one of the most important methods. It can be seen from the presented methods that there are no significant differences, they all are similar. Moreover, what some authors (Kociūnas, 1995) identify as separate methods (question asking, encouragement and calming, reflection of content: paraphrasing and generalization, reflection of feelings and generalization, feelings of the consultant and disclosure), others (Gvaldaitė and Švedaitė, 2005; Jones-Nelson, 2005) consider as the key skills of the consultant needed for active listening.

**Question asking.** When emphasizing question asking, it is important to know the questions of what structure you should ask the client, and what questions should be avoided. Questions are divided into two categories: open-ended and closed-ended. The purpose of closed-ended questions is to receive factual information about the client, but it is believed that they should not be abused, they should be used moderately in order that a consultation would not become an interrogation. Although during a consultation questions of different types should be used, the advantage of open-ended questions can be noticed in the scientific literature, because they are oriented towards the feelings, values, thoughts and behaviour of the client. Their advantage lies also in the fact that they broaden the contact. It is believed that when the orientation is towards the inner world of a man, the most appropriate question is the one beginning with the adverb “how”, because then the consulted person selects answers from his inner resources. This question is used to establish how the client feels and what he thinks. It is advisable to avoid a question beginning with the adverb “why”, because it automatically makes the client defend himself, whereas it sometimes makes the client feel helpless. After all, it is not rare that exactly this issue often leads to the consultant, because they cannot deal with it themselves. It is also advisable not to ask a few questions at a time, because the client can get flustered not knowing which one to answer. It is inappropriate to ask the same question differently a few times, because this shows the anxiety of the consultant. It is also advisable not to forestall the client’s thinking by asking your question and prompt his answer in such a way.

4 major listening errors are distinguished, which are linked to:

- interruption,
- controlling,
- the consultant being overcritical,
- giving unnecessary advice.

What is a good question? Here are a few tips for good listening:

- A clear goal for listening is needed. Every time you ask a question you need to know why you presented this question.
- Questions have to be positive, not evaluating and not prompting the consulted person. Questions like “Don’t you think that you should write much better?” should be avoided.
- A question has to be precise and apt.
- Questions have to be open-ended, encouraging an exhaustive answer.

Different types of questions are distinguished in the literature: open-ended, closed-ended, specifying, questions without a question mark, hypothetical, questions encouraging responsibility, questions encouraging conclusions, etc. (Table 6).

**Table 6. Types of questions**

Types of questions	Examples
<p><i>Open-ended questions</i> Questions encouraging an exhaustive answer. After hearing such an answer, you will present other questions, taking into consideration what your interlocutor says.</p>	<p>What? How? Why? Tell me more... Tell me about... What is your opinion?</p>
<p><i>Closed-ended questions</i> Questions that are suitable for specifying and managing conversation, however, they should be changed into open-ended questions, because if the major part consists of closed-ended questions, the conversation will not be smooth. The consulted person will feel as if he is interrogated.</p>	<p>Do? Does? Is? Are? Do... or? Does... or? Is... or?</p>
<p><i>Specifying questions</i> Questions which are used when inquiring into the essence of the discussed issue. Having heard the interlocutor's answer, develop it by presenting other questions.</p>	<p>I would like to specify... I would like to ask you to elaborate... Does it mean that ...?</p>
<p><i>Questions without a question mark</i> Questions by which we reflect the interlocutor's thoughts and encourage him to continue. Our encouragement is as if repetition of the thought of the student, our support to him. Such questions are appropriate when the consulted person doubts, pauses.</p>	<p>You've mentioned a few ideas... You say that it is a problem for you... I understand that you want to postpone this question...</p>
<p><i>Hypothetical questions</i> Questions which we can use to present other ideas and decisions for discussion.</p>	<p>What if? What do you think, if...? What is your opinion about...?</p>
<p><i>Questions encouraging responsibility</i> These are questions that help the consulted person create a concrete plan of action to implement his decisions.</p>	<p>When are you going to do it? What will you need in order to do that? What obstacles do you see and how are you going to overcome them?</p>



<i>Questions encouraging conclusion</i> Short questions encouraging the consulted person to continue his thought.	And? So? What?
<i>Questions encouraging creativity</i> Questions encouraging the student to use non-traditional ways to solve a problem.	What non-traditional ways can you see? What idea did you have, but did not voice it?

In addition to these types of questions, there are also distinguished the following: *recalling* (for recollection), *teaching* (to comprehend new information, establish causal relationships), *application*, encouraged to give reasons for personal opinion, hear out various responses, repeat *evaluation* (to describe other answers) or *conveying*, *interpretation*, *synthesis*, *analysis*, *adaptation*, etc.

The pedagogical literature identifies several requirements for questions during a conversation: they have to be clear, precise, unambiguous, formulated correctly, addressed to the whole class, pausing between questions.

Bloom's taxonomy is especially important for the preparation of the system (plan) of questions for conversations. On the basis of cognitive levels of this taxonomy, questions are presented from the most elementary ways that are fact-oriented to the questions encouraging to evaluate (Table 7).

It is not a rare occurrence that the client has a difficulty starting a conversation. In such a case, two techniques are advisable: "question-statement" intonation and the usage of conjunction "and". The peculiarity of the first technique lies in the fact that it gives the client the freedom of choice. In case the client is calm and wants to get involved in the conversation, he disagrees and understands the sentence as a question, whereas, if the client is not able to continue the conversation, he agrees with the sentence of the consultant interpreting it as a statement. The second technique also plays a significant role in the work of the consultant, because it indicates the continuation of events, consequently, the consultant suggests continuing the conversation step by step.

Table 7. Questions for conversations

Cognitive levels	Oriented towards	Examples of questions
Knowledge	Ability to remember, recall facts, thoughts, etc.	Who...? Where...? When...?
Comprehension	Ability to explain, receive information, etc.	Describe, explain...

Application	Ability to apply rules, ideas, etc., in various situations	Show how this statement can be applied...
Analysis	Ability to perceive, compare, single out separate elements of totality, etc.	Find differences, similarities...
Synthesis	Ability to unite into whole new structures, models, separate elements, facts, etc.	What did the author want to say by this phrase...
Evaluation	Ability to present comprehensive arguments, substantiate, evaluate phenomena, facts, etc.	What is your opinion about... Substantiate it.

(Further on it: *Aktyvaus mokymosi metodai: mokytojo knyga*, 1999, p. 29-33 [The Methods of Active Learning: Teacher's Book])

**Listening skills.** The listening of an especially good quality when a person feels heard and understood can be called being present with him during the conversation. In order that such being present would be called full-fledged, listening needs to be improved. *Listening* is one of the most complex skills which needs to be acquired in order to learn to communicate effectively. Keeping a continuous attention is possible for a limited period of time. This should be known to everybody who tries to concentrate. Most people understand listening as simply nodding head in agreement and a polite smile. However, listening is a sincere devotion to the process of communication. In the opinion of psychologists (Keenan, 1998; Želvys, 1995), a man who is good at communicating does not necessarily speak a lot and with persuasion, but also listens to his interlocutor attentively. Good specialists spend more than half the time listening to others. However, it has been noticed that the majority of people who are not successful communicators are bad listeners. They like speaking, but do not like listening. When there is no listening, there is a failure to give an interlocutor a necessary feedback. Even if there is an attempt to listen sincerely, most of them often fail in doing that. Even the best listeners encounter obstacles that diminish the ability to listen effectively.

Several forms of inability to listen can be distinguished:

1. *Feigned listening* is listening when an interlocutor feigns being attentive, nods his head, smiles, however, he is really too much self-absorbed, engaged in something else and does not hear what is said by the conversation participant. It is also possible to listen ostensibly when the topic of a conversation is not interesting or that has already

been heard earlier. Such behaviour wears the mask of politeness, however, the speaker is really not respected, he is ignored.

2. *Scenic listening* is the form of inability to listen that is typical of people who like to speak very much. They are interested only in what they want to say and allow an interlocutor to interpose only when they want to respire. Such a man does not try to listen, hold a conversation, but uses it as the means of self-expression and an advantage over others.
3. The form of *selfish listening* is typical of the people who listen actively and sincerely only when the topic of a conversation is important to them. Such interlocutors can be called fastidious.
4. *Stimulating listeners* are people who simply ignore topics that are unpleasant to them and hear only what they want to hear.
5. *Suspicious listeners* are most often people with low self-esteem who treat every thought expressed by the interlocutor as an insult or rebuke and begin to defend themselves immediately.
6. *Attacking listeners* are those who themselves look for the thoughts in the speech of the interlocutor that do not coincide with their opinion and start to criticize the interlocutor.
7. *Unfeeling listeners* are people who do not try to get absorbed in the thoughts presented by the interlocutor.

One of the reasons for the inability to listen is the abundance of information. Every day our ears and brains are attacked by mass media, colleagues, loved ones and friends. Therefore, we simply allow ourselves to rest and go astray into more pleasant things by not listening to an interlocutor. Another obstacle that hinders listening to an interlocutor attentively is that people listen faster than others speak. In addition, a very important reason is that people like talking more than listening. A speaker undoubtedly feels superior to the listener. Thus, not only is the need for self-expression satisfied, but also the possibility to control others and earn the respect of the surrounding people is felt. And conversely – all are allowed to silently think that there is nothing worth saying.

In order to keep good mutual relationships, it is important to listen, help the interlocutor. The goal of such listening is to encourage a person to openly reveal his problems, his concerns that obsess him, achieve that the interlocutor would voice what presses him and help find an optimal solution for the present situation. It is very important to properly concentrate attention on the most important questions. During a conversation it is

possible to take notes of the main thoughts of the interlocutor. The main thought is the idea, opinion or advice expressed by the speaker that can be very important to the listener. Listening to the interlocutor should be attentive, an attempt ought to be made to pick out and take note of the most important thoughts voiced by him in order that later it would be possible to return to them. It is necessary to learn to distinguish the main conversation ideas, i.e. to distinguish relationship levels from the whole of the content level. The content level is the topic of a conversation, it is information conveyed through words. The relationship level is mostly related to non-verbal communication which helps understand how one man assesses and receives another man. All that is based on feelings.



***Let us not forget that it is very important:***

- *To try to think more about what the speaker wants to say, and not what you want yourself. Inevitably there is a need for intellectual efforts, preparation to keep attention, an ability to understand having enough basic information, pre-planning. Instead of stating „How can I listen, if I'm not interested!“ understand that the listener has the same responsibility for that. Find which information is directly related to your activity, what you could use, etc. Look like you are interested - nobody is interested in speaking to the walls. Imagine yourself in the speaker's place.*
- *Do not be prejudiced against the presented information, even if it contradicts to your convictions or values. Do not draw hasty conclusions about the personality of the speaker – the first impression may be wrong, and your prejudice will block the information.*
- *Bad listeners hear only facts. You have to be able to weigh and evaluate the premises, arguments and logic presented by the speaker without being hostile.*
- *Attention span is not the same all the time. Know that attention is kept best in the beginning and the end. Therefore, try to consciously strengthen your attention in the middle of the conversation/listening.*
- *Make notes of the main thoughts of the speaker and special examples if you think that it is important.*
- *During a conversation it is important to find ways to show your attention: by nodding your head, looking attentively. If you have not understood everything, try to ask or comment. It is important not to interrupt the speaker.*

It should be noted that a good listener always listens actively. What does it mean? It means that not only does he hear the interlocutor's words, but information also reaches him through other channels – he gets a lot of data from the voice timbre, the changes of speech speed, body language, etc., of the interlocutor. Not only does he hear the interlocutor, but he understands him and tries to get absorbed in his needs.

In order that the consultant would listen actively, patience, curiosity and systematic approach are needed.

Two forms of active listening are distinguished: non-reflexive listening and reflexive listening.

In **non-reflexive listening** the consultant does not interrupt the speech of the consulted person, he only listens attentively or interrupts it with short remarks (e.g., “Really?”, “I understand”). Such form is especially useful when our consulted person:

- wants to express his perspective about some question;
- wants to open his heart;
- has difficulty expressing his thoughts, etc.

Reflexive listening is showing an active relationship which allows to understand an interlocutor better. Misunderstandings are possible due to several reasons:

- Poly-semanticity of words: they can be understood variously depending on the attitudes of a listener, context and understanding;
- Bias: often we hear what we want to hear;
- Inaccuracies when formulating thoughts;
- An inability of the client to distinguish the essence.

By listening reflexively, consultants show that they are interested in the thoughts of the consulted person. Therefore, when listening reflexively, the following tools are employed: encouragement and calming, content generalization and specification, content paraphrase, reflection of emotions, interpretation and silence pauses.

*By encouraging and calming* the client, the consultant encourages him to talk further and does not allow him to become reserved.

“Reflection of content: paraphrase and generalization” and “Reflection of feelings and generalization” are also one of more significant parts of reflexive listening. When they are employed, the client feels that he is actively

listened to and that he is understood. These methods are significant not only to the client, but to the consultant himself, because it helps him orientate better in his thoughts and collect needed information. The importance of the method “Feelings of the consultant and disclosure” lies in the fact that by disclosing yourself you allow another person to disclose himself. But there is one rule that is in operation here, which is objectivity. In other words, it is important that the consultant’s emotions would benefit not the client, but himself.

*By generalizing content and specifying it*, the consultant performs two good works: he shows that he listens and structuralizes and controls the conversation. He also encourages the consulted person to consider what he has said and look at his thoughts from aside.

*Content paraphrase* is useful when there is a need to distinguish the essential information expressed by the student. Paraphrase is used when the consulted person presents some kind of information, whereas the consultant distinguishes essential aspects and tells them to the student.



**Remember that:**

*Consulting process can be helped by the formulations of Socratic questions. They are based on the main principle – the client’s answer to the question presented to him should encourage another question, etc. Thus, dialogue is developed (Table 8).*

**Table 8. Examples of questions created according to Socratic methodology**

<i>The objective of the question</i>	<i>Examples of questions</i>
<i>To find out client’s objectives and goals</i>	<i>What change do you want to implement? What result do you want to achieve? What would happen if you failed to do that?</i>
<i>To find out consulted person’s motives</i>	<i>Why is it important to you? What will you gain if you succeed in implementing this idea? How will it influence....?</i>
<i>To be assured about the expediency of the consulted person’s objectives</i>	<i>What does it mean to you? What is the significance of the objectives to you?</i>

<b><i>To get a deeper knowledge about the attitudes of the student</i></b>	<b><i>What do you think about it? Why are you raising this question? What thoughts encourage you to implement that? What thoughts hinder you?</i></b>
<b><i>To find out consulted person's achievements and positive experience</i></b>	<b><i>What have you already done? What good practice helped you to discover these ideas? What proves the effectiveness of your ideas? What arguments can you present?</i></b>
<b><i>To help see the problem from another perspective</i></b>	<b><i>What other ways do you see? What would your colleagues say?</i></b>
<b><i>To help see the connection between thoughts</i></b>	<b><i>How is it connected with...? How could it be translated into practice?</i></b>
<b><i>To help the consulted person select solutions</i></b>	<b><i>How did you choose these ideas? What are weak and strong sides of these situations? Which out of these solutions seems the most acceptable to you?</i></b>
<b><i>To help the consulted person realize things</i></b>	<b><i>What does it say about you? How does it change your choice? What influence will it have on your practice?</i></b>
<b><i>To encourage education</i></b>	<b><i>How does this conversation help you study? What conclusions have you drawn from the conversation?</i></b>

The technique *reflection of emotions* is aimed at helping the consulted person assess his emotions and show him that the consultant is in keeping with these emotions.

It is believed that *interpretation technique* is one of the most complex and important techniques, because the consultant reads the client's body language, pays attention to the signals conveyed through his voice, observes whether all that is in keeping with his words and draws the appropriate conclusions. Steward (2005) maintains that through the words of a person 10% of information is received, through the tone – 40%, and the largest part, i.e. 50 %, is received visually. Therefore, the understanding of body language plays a special role in the activity of the consultant. When mentioning

signals received through the voice, the sound of speech, articulation, tones, recurring sentences and the speed of speech are emphasized, whereas physical distance, facial expressions, look, eye contact, gestures, posture and clothes are attributed to the body language.

*Silence pauses* are distinguished, because this technique is like a therapy which can be very meaningful. Silence allows the client to realize that he is responsible for the conversation. It also allows the client to immerse in himself and explore his feelings, attitudes, values and behaviour. They are also useful for the consultant, because they allow thinking the conversation over.



### Questions and tasks

1. What listeners do you not like personally?
2. Think about what kind of listener you are.
3. What listening styles are personally typical of you?
4. Present examples of specifying questions, questions reflecting the feelings of a listener and generalization questions.



### 1.6. Consulting methods

Individual consulting can be divided into direct and indirect. Direct consulting is understood as the university teacher's communication with the student "tête-à-tête", whereas indirect consulting is when the student is consulted using modern information technologies, such as on the internet and the like.

Online consulting can be described as synchronic or asynchronous remote interaction between the client and consultants, during which an attempt is made to help solve the problems of the clients and make better solutions through the means of communication, using e-mail, chat and video conferences broadcasted via the internet. Online consulting is also called e-counseling or cybercounseling. Counseling may take place through the telephone and the internet.



Life in virtual space may differ strongly from the real life and real relationships. Virtual relationships are easily started, you can be what you want in them, it is easy to break such relationships at any time. Some people are freed from inner barriers by virtual space, they are encouraged for a more sincere communication, it makes disclosure easier to them (especially to shy people who feel an increased anxiety in the sphere of social relationships), whereas to others, anonymous, “invisible” relationships is a great opportunity to create an alternative image of their real self, develop and solve non-existent, invented problems, create intriguing virtual relationships or simply pass free time.

While communicating on the internet, the effect of relax is often noticed. People can express their emotions easier, choose sharper words during discussions.

The following factors are at work when communicating on the internet:

- anonymity (you can remain anonymous without telling your real name);
- invisibility (in most cases people do not see each other, even do not know whether an interlocutor is sitting at a concrete time near the computer, cannot see his face);
- delayed reaction (it is possible to pause for a period of time chosen by the replier);
- “solipsistic introjection” (sometimes such virtual communication resembles talking with yourself, everything depends on how you introduce yourself in the created texts, what image you want to be seen by others);
- equal status (during such communication, the difference of status is not felt: we do not know the interlocutor’s real age, we do not see his clothes, environment, diplomas, so everything depends on abilities to express thoughts and emotions on the internet).

The greatest part of the communication during online consultations occurs in writing. The expression of thoughts in the form of the text greatly depends on the experience in written communication and obtained skills. The image of the received message also shows cognitive and emotional communication style of the interlocutor. A carefully written letter may lack spontaneity. An overly spontaneous letter may disturb. The best is the balance between spontaneity and self-discipline. A very chaotic text may also show personal pathology, his psychological condition. Different personal styles of

written communication can be compatible, incompatible with each other, or complementary to each other. For example, the abundant usage of signs that strengthen the expression of emotions can be normal for some people as an additional communication tool to improve mutual understanding and strengthen contact, whereas to others these signs, their abundance can cause irritation, make feel uncomfortably, even encourage breaking virtual communication. Writing style is also affected by the peculiarities of the personality of the writer. For example, compulsive people tend to write neat, logically structured, intellectual messages with little emotion and few grammatical errors. Personalities having hysteric tendencies make more dramatic presentations, where there is less order, but loads of expressive space, capital letters, usage of other signs, and colourful language dominates. Personalities of narcissistic type can write very long, rambling letters, schizoids tend to write concise letters, impulsive people write messages that are poorly structured, with grammatical errors, emotional phrases marked with lots of exclamation marks or other signs expressing emotions.

The peculiarities of text construction reflect features, such as the empathy of a text. Empathic people, when writing, try to take into account the needs of their partners. They use a variety of signs accordingly, modify the length of a text. Narcissistic personalities write a lot, they are bored people, or in the condition of frustration can omit parts of words. Empathic people are able to make out what the interlocutor feels from hints in the text. This skill is an essential professional skill for those who want to consult over the internet.

**Psychological peculiarities of written communication.** When communicating over the internet, there is a stronger possibility for a displacement reaction. Due to the fact that an interlocutor cannot be seen, information gaps can be filled with existing expectations, stereotypes, fantasy. After a long virtual communication, a person can be greatly surprised, having met him later for an immediate conversation, that the man with whom written communication was maintained is completely different than what he had imagined. Sometimes, when communicating, displacement reactions can be quite problematic, especially when consulting the clients that have problems regarding authorities. They can begin writing angry letters, doubt the competence of consultants and their ability to help solve problems. One more circumstance to which attention should be paid when communicating over the internet is the storage of e-mails. Reasons for such storage can be understood unequivocally. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as the

confirmation of the importance of relationships (we usually store those letters that mean something to us), on the other hand, it can be interpreted as a certain tool for control (it is always possible to come back and remind what the consultant or the client has written earlier). Quoting earlier letters can also be evaluated unequivocally. Some interlocutors will accept it respectfully, they will think that you remember what has been spoken, whereas others can start feeling ill at ease, because they will understand that you store everything what has been spoken. In addition, they themselves can be not assured whether they have written in such a way, especially if the letters from “deep past” are quoted. It is especially dangerous if negative letters, which are not in the disposition of the writer, because he has not stored them, are quoted. Furthermore, a continuous addition of commentaries from the past can start inciting the dissatisfaction of the interlocutor and be understood as harassment.

When counseling over the e-mail, a question often arises what to do with earlier letters. If you leave an old letter while replying, it can be understood by the client unequivocally. It can be appropriate if the letter was short – it is like the response, the commentary on the past thought. In such a case, it is easier for the interlocutor to follow the course of the communication. On the other hand, such replying can be understood as the reflection of the interlocutor’s laziness, reluctance to invest into the relationship maintenance. The client can also start feeling as not being important for the consultant and think that perhaps the consultant stores the history of their communication, because he does not remember what he spoke with the majority of his clients. A possible alternative is to leave those letters which have a common thought, correspond in segments. It shows the attention of the consultant to the interlocutor. Such way of communication facilitates the perception of the main topic, the axis, of the conversation for the client.

### **Factors impeding and facilitating communication on the internet**

One of the features, which influence the quality of consulting and which are absent when consulting live, is technical interference, e.g., a busy server. When suddenly we do not receive a letter, we can start reasoning whether it is a technical or interpersonal problem. One more question that can arise is whether the interlocutor on the other side sees the same text as you, whether your pictures, fonts and colours did not become distorted while sending and decoding the message, in case the consultant and the client use different software that are incompatible. Communication on the internet is facilitated

by the usage of a variety of tools to make the text more lively. For example, it is possible to use the following:

- emoticons (smileys, orzes, frownies, etc.);
- emphasis on separate words (by writing them in capital letters or using a different font);
- pauses expressed in dots;
- words expressing certain condition (e.g., OK);
- exclamation marks (they should not be overused, because the interlocutor will begin thinking that you are in the condition of mania);
- acronyms that convey your expression.

When using these tools, it is important not to forget that there always remains a certain danger how you will be interpreted. For example, a wink may mean “elbowing”, that both of you know something, sarcasm and harassment, etc. Different people also assess differently the amount of such tools in the text. Some of them may devote to them the majority of the text, whereas others practically do not use them at all. When people communicate for a long time, they can create certain emoticons peculiar only to them. The appearance of such language when communicating with the client for a longer period of time should be encouraged. A better understanding of the client is assisted by the ability of the consultant to assess the periphery of the messages, the information which is received together with an e-mail or a synchronic conversation. Valuable information is the following one:

– **User name.** It reflects how a man wants to be seen on the internet. If a real name is given, then the man wants that he would be seen as himself; if a pseudonym is given, then more secrecy and playfulness is sought, there is a wish to reveal some secret side of oneself, some desire or fear. Changes in the name may show changes in the personality, a desire that others would view him differently; if there is a shift to the real name, it shows that there is a desire to unmask.

– **Subject.** It can be an introduction, question, answer, joke, teasing, prodding, swear word, shriek, whisper, emotion. It can contradict the idea of the text. Various signs, symbols can enhance the thought (e.g., “the solution is ...”, “John, help! Help! HELP!!!”, “????”, etc.). Those headlines are like the headlines of newspapers, where looking to history changes can be seen well. They show a certain progress to the consultant. When a new topic appears, it tells a lot. It is taking the initiative to communicate. If there is a continuous refusal, it can be concluded that such people are passive in

the relationships, they are indifferent and lazy, they may have no sense of responsibility, belonging, control. It is very important for the consultant to pay attention to what degree the client responds and to what degree he creates new topics himself.

– **Greeting.** It also says a lot. It is possible to greet formally, and it is possible to greet informally using the words “Hi” or “Hello”. If the name is written, it always shows a greater intimacy and attention to the interlocutor than a simple “Hi”. It is always fun when greetings, while communicating, change, they are not the same. If there is no greeting, it can be assumed that the interlocutor is lazy or passive, or that he is generally not inclined to communicate with you. There may be people who think that they interact with the program or the computer. However, the absence of a greeting may also mean the opposite thing – the communicator feels so strongly attached to you that he does not need greeting anymore.

– **Parting.** It is also an important tool. It is possible to part in a very interesting and creative way. A simpler way is to write the name. If initials and a signature are written, it may seem overly bureaucratic. It says a lot if somebody stops writing by using correspondence templates for the end of the letter and moves to a normal communication, which means that the relationship has become closer. Synchronic communication is different than exchanging e-mails. Here, more abbreviations and acronyms are used. Texts are not polished, the other person sees how the interlocutor's thought is born, what is corrected when writing. During an online conversation, more complicated questions are asked easier than in a live conversation.

Normal communication should not be limited to exchanging e-mails. It is natural if there is a shift to a telephone conversation and live meetings. Such meetings greatly help dispel unrealistic expectations, check your understanding and the projections. Part of the people do not want live communication. They create themselves in a virtual world and that is enough for them.

Different people have different approaches towards internet communication itself. To some, especially to younger people, it is a common, everyday phenomenon. Others tend to give priority to live communication, they think that they will not be able to express their problems properly in writing, to understand what the consultant wants to say. Clients can be not prepared to use information systems independently due to the barrier they have. In order to identify such possible barriers, questionnaires may be given in the

beginning of counseling. Learning styles may differ: some learn through reading, others need social contacts. Not only does the evaluation of online communication and the desire to get remote counseling differ, but also the ability to communicate using modern information technologies. While consulting over the internet, various means of communication can be used:

- e-mail;
- chat;
- billboards;
- blogs;
- direct video conferences.

Due to the fact that information exchange between the consulted person and the consultant most often occurs by writing a text (except video conferences), it is important to be able to precisely express thoughts in writing, because otherwise the interlocutor may misunderstand the text of his conversation partner and get disappointed, which may cause anxiety or fantasies. People's experience of communication through e-mails may greatly differ. Some people may be real "virtuosos" of virtual communication who have been communicating for many years and days at a time, whereas others have only recently found this way of communication. Even greater differences are noticed in people's experience in using direct online conversations (chat) for communication. Some people have no experience at all, whereas others communicate very skillfully during the conversation: they know when to write the text, when to pause and wait for a while, when to respond. Those having little experience often are in a hurry to write while waiting for the answer, they do not keep up fluent synchronic exchange of messages. It is especially important to take into consideration a different experience of clients in online communication during group consultations.

Appropriate attitudes and abilities have to be the possession not only of the clients of online counseling, but of the consultant himself. In order to become an online career consultant, it is worth trying possibilities by consulting the client about career questions directly, "tête-à-tête". Only after mastering live consulting techniques, it is possible to try to move to online consulting.

In order to become a good online career consultant, firstly, it is necessary to master the means of remote communication well, to be able to work on the computer professionally, to be interested in the most recent information

technologies, to be able to apply them when counseling. Not all can be good online career teaching consultants. One of the most important requirements in order to build an emotional connection online is not to have a sceptical approach.



*Remember that online consulting has advantages and disadvantages.*

*Advantages of online consulting:*

- *It is more accessible, there is no need to go anywhere;*
- *Relationships between the consultant and the consulted person are smoother, the only influence is the consultant's competence, not environment, clothes, appearance;*
- *The consulted person feels more anonymous, therefore, it is easier for him to disclose himself;*
- *There are no time and space limitations;*
- *Fast feedback;*
- *It is easier to review consulting history.*

*Disadvantages of online consulting:*

- *Invisible nonverbal signals (eyes, tone of voice, etc.) are not seen.*
- *A question can arise whether it is possible at all to communicate effectively, much less with empathy, in writing, without seeing the interlocutor and his nonverbal behaviour.*
- *Online consulting does not guarantee (at least so far) complete confidentiality; no matter what connection safety tools are used, there is still a danger of hacking and data theft;*
- *Information authenticity is not guaranteed; it is even difficult to guarantee that the same student is consulted;*
- *Online consulting is discontinued easier, an elementary technical interference is sufficient;*
- *Online consulting greatly depends on the reliability of the internet connection between the client and the consultant, the compatibility of the used software;*
- *Online consulting depends on the ability to express thoughts fluently in writing (people may simply not have such skills, because even different brain structures are responsible for writing and reading and speaking with voice usage);*
- *Online consulting has not been sufficiently researched scientifically, very few empirical studies support its effectiveness.*

Another obstacle is the fear of technologies and the internet. It is important to continually train the skills of online communication. It can be accomplished by chatting at different websites devoted for communication and chat portals. It is very important for the online consultant himself to be able to express his thoughts and emotions in writing and be able to help do that to the clients. Those who want to consult online need to be flexible, as well. Such counseling is not for those who like clarity, because this way of teaching is in its infancy of application, there are many things that are not clear, not revealed, not confirmed by empirical studies. There are loads of things which consultants have to discover themselves, because information on this topic is also scarce. Those that consult online also need to have a greater tolerance for failures, stressful situations, because the probability that the client will discontinue consultations without any notification about that is greater than in direct consulting. In addition, the connection may break, it is possible to confuse contacts and send a letter not to the intended addressee.

Online consulting cannot fully substitute direct consulting. A general rule that has to be kept in mind is that online consulting is used when immediate counselling, “tête-à-tête”, is complicated or impossible at all.



### Questions and tasks

1. Discuss together with the student what ways will be used in communication.
2. How often direct consulting is planned?
3. How will ethical questions of remote consulting be solved?



### 1.7. Time management

**Time management** is the increase of personal work efficiency through the rational use of time.

Due to the improper use of the available personal time, it is often complained about the constant lack of time.



A more efficient use of time determines a positive personal attitude towards time. Therefore, a person can enjoy self-realization in a greater measure and achieve a better quality of professional life.

In order to use time more effectively, it is necessary to follow certain rules and time planning principles: setting goals, written planning, everyday planning, setting up priorities, evaluation of the curve of activity effectiveness, having a quiet time, etc.

**Goal setting.** Goal is the basis of every activity. It makes clear where a person wants to go and what results he wants to achieve. Having a clear goal helps focus attention in the right direction, plan what to do in a given time, assist others in understanding what is being done and how to get into a general plan.

Setting of grounded and motivating goals is one of the most important elements of time planning, however, it does not guarantee their successful implementation by itself. Goals are landmarks indicating what an organization wants to achieve. A question how to do that has to be answered by further planning stages.

**Written planning.** The more detailed time planning is, the better the plans are implemented. Planning is the preparation to implement goals. The greatest advantage of time planning is time saving. It is confirmed by the activity practice of the majority of companies that the more time is devoted for planning, the less time is needed to implement the plans. It has been calculated that a man who devotes 8 minutes for his workday planning every day and keeps up that plan can save 1 hour daily. Time planning is very useful. Firstly, if the work is planned, it is possible to achieve the goal faster and with greater quality, because it allows to concentrate and not to be distracted. On the other hand, time is saved to do more important works. In addition, if the work is planned, it is possible to keep all the tasks and project in front of your eyes. One more element, which is no less important, is stress decreasing. A man feels guaranteed that the most important works will surely be accomplished, because he clearly imagines the course of all day.

It is important to plan time in writing, because:

- time plans that are “kept in the head” are most often lost;
- what has been committed to paper, has been committed to memory;
- written plans provide a free place in the memory for other information;
- written plans have a psychological effect – it encourages to take action;

- a specific plan focuses activities, helps to maintain the basic line;
- constant control does not let you forget anything (or postpone work for another day);
- a written plan is a document about your active or not active work;
- it decreases the number of unnecessary discussions – “It was not me who had to do that, not in those terms”, etc.

**Everyday planning.** It is recommended to start planning your time by making a day plan. It is especially important for those who start planning time, because a day is a short interval of time that is easy to imagine. If that day was not successful, you can start everything again. A person who is not able to follow a plan of a day will also not be able to accomplish longer term plans (weekly, monthly and yearly).

It has to be remembered that a plan for a day should include only those works that you have and can perform. The main rule of planning is that you have to distribute only 60% of day time in your plans. Unforeseen events can always happen and your personal matters can also prevent you from following your plan. Therefore, these blocks should make up a day plan:

- 60% for intended tasks (for a day plan);
- 20% for unforeseen tasks (unforeseen main tasks);
- 20% for vicissitudes (time reserve for interferences – time thieves).

Day plans can be made following the ALPEN method:

- Writing down tasks, stages of activities and deadlines;
- Estimation of activity duration;
- Setting aside reserve time;
- Decision making’
- Final check.

**Setting up priorities.** Defining priorities means that you have to foresee which tasks will be done first and which ones last. The so called ABC analysis can be used here. It is proven by research of time that A is very important, B is important and C is not very important. You do not have to distribute task performing time proportionally. You often spend time for not important daily C tasks, because A type of tasks and problems do not appear every day. It is recommended to divide the entire information that you get into three parts (Table 9):

**Table 9. Importance of tasks**

<b>Importance of tasks</b>		
65 %	20 %	15 %
A tasks (very important)	B tasks (important)	C tasks (small, daily tasks)
15 %	20 %	65 %

Practically speaking, the ABC analysis means that you have to plan one-two A type of tasks and two-three B type of tasks per day. The remaining time is left for C type of tasks.

**Evaluation of the curve of activity effectiveness.** While planning time, it is important to evaluate one more factor – human efficiency. Efficiency is a human state defining his capability to perform specific tasks or works. An average statistical variation of efficiency can be charted by a curve.

Although some factors influence the curve of efficiency of specific people, such general conclusions can still be drawn: the highest point of efficiency is before lunch time; the same level is no longer achieved throughout the day; after lunch, drowse always comes, which is tried to be overcome by many with a cup of coffee, exercising. In the early evening, we will be fresh again. However, we soon lose power after that and have to go to bed.

Long and intensive work is often not the best way out, because when working without breaks we start making mistakes. Therefore, we cannot consider breaks as a time waste. Breaks are a new load of energy which is as important for a human as fuel for a car. Therefore, it is essential to plan regular rest breaks throughout a work day.



• ***Remember a few time management rules:***

*You will never have enough time, so you will have to set priorities.*

*Set up precise agenda.*

*Do not delay important questions that you do not like.*

*Eliminate everything that is not important.*

*Analyse what disturbs you.*

*Plan all the meetings with students in advance and periodically.*

*Set and say the time for not intended meeting, which you know you can afford to have.*

*Collect all of your ideas into one spot, maybe a book or a notebook.*

*Try to finish the work you have started.*

*Learn to say “no”.*

*Always control your time spending.*

*Do everything quite fast. Try to avoid excessive perfectionism.*

*Worrying and stress creates tasks that you cannot see in perspective and which you cannot cope with.*

*Before you begin, think much and only then act.*

*Use the elephant technique: “The easiest way to eat an elephant is if you eat it a piece at a time”. Put it into your plans: tasks for a year, month, week, day, evening. You will be surprised what results you can achieve if you do it bit by bit.*

*Do not forget the following while planning a day:*

*Important tasks have to be done in the morning;*

*Perform unpleasant tasks first;*

*Plan your day in written form;*

*Set aside some reserve time;*

*Have in mind possible setbacks and unexpected changes;*

*Plan your time realistically;*

*At the end of the day, plan the next day.*

**Peace snatch.** Any kind of work needs some time for involvement. If a manager is often troubled, his time is seemingly chopped into pieces. Every time after an interrupted task you need to get involved again. This is how you can continue what you have started. While performing important tasks, it is essential to secure an uninterrupted activity.

It is possible that the main time management problems can arise due to these causes:

- Inability to finish tasks, which can be conditioned by a too heavy load of work, laziness, or a complicated task which a person is afraid to start;
- Personal failure to be organized: absence of working system, inability to make up one's mind, etc.;
- Too big load of reading: too many tasks are read at a time;
- Too much communication around;
- Lack of self-discipline: procrastination of important tasks, miscalculation of time, inability to say “no” and carelessness;

- Too active participation everywhere and every time: desire to be important and participate everywhere;
- Absence of priorities: lack of self-discipline, tendency to act without thinking;
- Inability to make decisions: fear of mistakes, irrational techniques of solving problems.



### Questions and tasks

- Ponder over your past week and think what the reasons for your lack of time are. Study the reasons why your time was detained.
- Which task was unnecessary?
- Consider the following: what task did I do longer than I had to?
- Make up a schedule for periodic consultation of students for half a year. Project how much time you will commit to each student.
- Confer with students and prepare a timetable for time periods when each student has to send a certain part of work to you.
- Plan your work day: set up goals for the day, priorities, time duration for each activity, etc.

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## 2. Guide for Preparation and Defence of Final Master Thesis

### 2.1. Formal requirements of Master thesis



#### 2.1.1. Mission of Master thesis

The goal of this guide is to help students methodologically prepare and defend their final Master thesis and to assist supervisors, consultants of Master thesis in guiding students.

One of the important competences which have to be acquired during studies in Joint Master programme “Social work with children and youth” is preparation and implementation research in the field of children and youth welfare. This competence is acquired during the course “Social work research methodology” and writing the final paper – Master thesis.

During the studies, students should achieve these learning outcomes related to social work research (Table 10):

**Table 10. Learning outcomes**

<b>Learning outcomes. At the end of Master studies students will be able to do the following:</b>
Apply social theory to social work research
Integrate knowledge about children, youth, their environment to own research project
Analyse and use legal documents preparing scientific text
Analyse scientific literature critically, assess theoretical and practical aspects of a chosen problem
Initiate, organize and implement social work research
Conceptualize research and argument the choice of quantitative or qualitative methodology for researching children, youth and their environment
Plan research according to a chosen methodology
Choose and apply qualitative and quantitative data collecting techniques
Analyse, systematize and illustrate research results and interpret research data

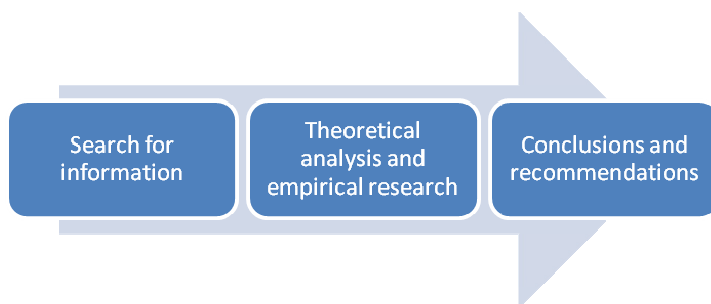


Formulate conceptual conclusions which correspond to the research goal and objectives
Apply research results to children and youth problems' solving
Use research methodology for the assessment of professional practice
Apply research data and results to professional practice
Present research results to a professional audience
Reflect professional experience of planning and implementing social work research in a group
Apply social work values and ethical principles to social work research, follow research ethics

Master thesis is an original independently done research, which analyses social work problems and searches for their solutions. This is a qualificative students' work, after finishing and defence of which the Qualifications Commission decides about student's preparation for labour market and awards him his Master degree.

The purpose of the thesis is to enable the student to develop a deeper knowledge, understanding, abilities and attitudes in the context of the programme of the study. The thesis should be finished at the end of the programme and offers the opportunity to deepen and synthesise knowledge acquired in previous studies and during Master studies.

General steps of the Master thesis are shown in Picture 1.



**Picture 1. Steps of Master thesis preparation**

Master thesis is prepared integrating student's individual work, research methodology course and consultations with the supervisor in the following three stages:

- ✓ During the first stage, the strategy of information search is developed. After that, search of scientific literature, research and statistical data, legal documents, etc., is done. Sources are used to the conceptualization of the problem and operationalization of empirical research.
- ✓ Based on found and read scientific literature, the investigated problem is specified, the object, goal, objectives, hypothesis or research questions are formulated; this is followed by an in depth theoretical analysis, which leads to empirical research; before data collection, a clear methodology should be written, including all required parameters; empirical data is described and analysed.
- ✓ Based on theoretical and empirical analyses, sound conclusions followed by recommendations are drawn.

The role of the supervisor in this process is to give methodological support to the student, to make suggestions and recommendations, assess student's accomplishment of interim tasks at the end of each semester. The supervisor is not responsible for the content of the Master thesis; the quality of the final paper is a responsibility of the student.



**Hours for supervision of the Master thesis are included in the supervisor's workload. Check how many hours the teacher has to spend for your consultations (including individual, via email, online) and try to use them as efficiently as possible. Keep in mind that reading your texts also counts as consultation hours.**

**Be active, ask for consultation and clarify what is not clear. Send your text in advance that the supervisor would have enough time to read it and meet for discussion of your text. Remember that the supervisor, as you also, should not work at the weekends, during public holidays and at nights.**

**Never send your text on Sunday evening asking for the consultation on Monday morning.**



### Questions and tasks

- ✓ Look once more at the learning outcomes you have to achieve during your Master studies. Assess what already do you know and what do

you need to accomplish during your Master studies. Check the same Table after your Master thesis defence (Table 11).

**Table 11. Table of self-evaluation**

<b>Learning outcome</b>	<b>Assessment (1-5)</b>	<b>What should I do to have the highest mark</b>
Apply social theory to social work research		
Integrate knowledge about children, youth, their environment to your own research project		
Analyse and use legal documents when preparing a scientific text		
Analyse scientific literature critically, assess theoretical and practical aspects of a chosen problem		
Initiate, organize and implement social work research		
Conceptualize research and argument the choice of quantitative or qualitative methodology for researching children, youth and their environment		
Plan research according to a chosen methodology		
Choose and apply qualitative and quantitative data collecting techniques		
Analyse, systematize and illustrate research results and interpret research data		
Formulate conceptual conclusions which correspond to the research goal and objectives		
Apply research results to children and youth problems' solving		
Use research methodology for the assessment of professional practice		
Apply research data and results to professional practice		

Present research results to a professional audience		
Reflect professional experience of planning and implementing social work research in a group		
Apply social work values and ethical principles to social work research, follow research ethics		



### 2.1.2. Selection of Master thesis topic

Students choose Master thesis topic from the list which is suggested by the Social work with children and youth programme committee. The topic should be closely related to the reality of social work with children and youth. The list includes provisional topics, which show a direction of the research. A specific research topic is formulated after discussions between the student and the thesis' supervisor. The student can suggest his topic as well, in such a case, he has to discuss it with the Chairman of the Committee and the supervisor. If the topic is accepted, it should be approved by the Committee. The main requirements for the topic are relevance, scientific significance (theoretical and/or practical), novelty.



***A good research topic should pass the "So what?" test. Also, it should be specific, capable of being answered by evidences, feasible to study and open to doubt, and thus, answerable in one than more possible way.***

***Rubin and Babbie, 1993***

The topic of the final thesis analyses a scientific (theoretical or practical/professional) problem, which is addressed by a scientific literature review and empirical research. The topic is formulated in such a way, that it would be possible to investigate it in the time allocated for writing Master thesis. If the formulated topic is too broad, the problem will be not analysed in depth, whereas if the formulated topic is too narrow, Master thesis will not fulfil formal requirements.



● ***If Master thesis topic is:***

- ***too narrow, it should be broadened;***
- ***too broad, it should be narrowed;***
- ***too abstract, it should be specified;***
- ***too complicated (includes two or more (un)related problems), it should be narrowed.***

After formulating the Master thesis topic, it is useful to do a preliminary search of information and to know more about the problem under study. Students can look at professional vocabularies, encyclopaedias and other information sources, search on the internet, etc. As the research object is the social reality or processes, which have to be investigated by a researcher, a student should know about the research topic as much as possible.



● ***Process of writing Master thesis should be a pleasant activity, so you have to choose a topic, which is not only relevant, but also interesting to you. Discuss a suggested topic with your supervisor. If you do not like the topic, suggest your own.***



### **Questions and tasks**

- ✓ Choose a topic from the topics' list. Underline keywords in the title. What is the essence of the paper? What should you do in order to investigate the problem? Brainstorm and write down all ideas which come to your mind.
- ✓ Choose three articles related to your topic about children and youth from the research journal "Social Work" (<https://www3.mruni.eu/ojs/social-work/issue/archive>). Look at the topic formulation. Is it clear to you? Is it too narrow/specific? Is it too broad/abstract? Justify your answer. Read articles and think how you could include them in your Master thesis.



### 2.1.3. Planning of Master thesis

The final Master thesis is written during all study period. The planning of Master thesis begins from the topic selection. Students must select themes of the final Master work during the third stage of registering for autumn session studies in the first study year, i.e. in full-time studies – from September 1st to September 15th, whereas in part-time studies – under study timetables provided in the websites of the Faculty (Institute).

After choosing the topic, the student should meet with the supervisor and discuss the topic and specify it if it is necessary. At the beginning of the first semester, but not later than October 30th, the student has to approve the individual Master thesis preparation plan with the supervisor, and according to this plan to get accreditation from the supervisor at the end of every semester. The more detailed the plan is, the easier is to write the thesis constantly and consistently. The supervisor consults the student according to this plan.



### Questions and tasks

Prepare your individual Master thesis preparation plan (see an example in Annex 4). Foresee activities, interim tasks and time of individual consultations (no less than once a month) with your supervisor. Write as specifically as possible. The plan should be approved by your supervisor (Table 12).

**Table 12. Individual Master thesis preparation plan**

Date	Activities and tasks	Remarks
I semester		
II semester		
III semester		



#### 2.1.4. Requirements of academic honesty

During the final Master thesis preparation, students, supervisors and consultants should follow the University's Code of Ethics (2007), Mykolas Romeris University studies procedure (2011) and other related documents.



**97. During the course of studies and evaluation of the results thereof, students and teachers must comply with the University's Code of Ethics. Violation of the principle of fair competition, cheating, plagiarism or any other form of academic dishonesty related to the evaluation of study results may result in expulsion of the student from the University on the basis of a breach of academic ethics.**

*Mykolas Romeris University studies procedure, 2011*

The main rules of academic honesty are:

- ✓ The paper or its parts should not be used in any other higher education institution;
- ✓ The paper or its parts could not be used for any other (course, tasks) assessment; students can use texts from they bachelor thesis, but this should be clearly defined in the text and the list of references;
- ✓ A clear distinction between author's and other people's ideas, texts, data, information should be done. It is not allowed to use other people's text without clear references in the text to the sources. Otherwise, it is counted as plagiarism.



**97.1. A student's research paper shall be considered plagiarism if:  
97.1.1. The research paper or part thereof includes the text of another person word for word without indicating the source, or indicating the source but not putting the copied text in quotation marks. Word for word use of another person's text without indicating the source, or indicating the source but not putting the copied text in quotation marks, shall be considered**

*plagiarism if said text in the paper constitutes more than one half of a written page, i.e. 900 characters, with spaces;*

*97.1.2. The research paper or part thereof is composed by paraphrasing the text of another person without indicating the source. Paraphrasing another person's text without indicating the source shall be considered plagiarism if said text in the paper constitutes more than one written page, i.e. 1,800 characters, with spaces;*

*97.1.3. The research paper presents data within the text, charts or diagrams without indicating the source (except in cases when said data was collected by the author him/herself);*

*97.1.4. The research paper was presented and defended at this or any other educational institution in Lithuania or abroad.*

*97.2. In the event of continued research, it must be indicated in the text which of its parts has been taken from previous research papers written by the same author. If authorship of continued research is not specified, expulsion from the University is not applicable.*

*Mykolas Romeris University studies procedure, 2011*

A student should submit the final thesis together with the declaration of the prescribed form in which he confirms that the final thesis submitted for assessment has been accomplished independently, without plagiarism and following the rules of academic writing (Annex 5).

It is prohibited for other people to participate in writing your Master thesis, except if they help you in the following ways:

- to collect data (e.g., in a big survey if it is really necessary for your Master thesis),
- to analyse data (e.g., using specialised data proceeding programmes).

In such cases, it is obligatory to define who helped you, what kind of support was provided, and its extend.



## Questions and tasks

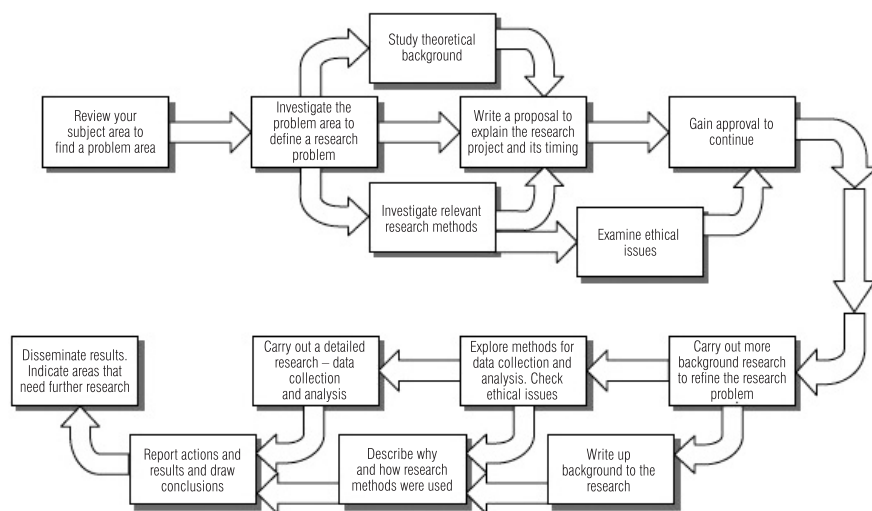
Look at Annex 5 and fill in the Confirmation of Independence of the Written Work.





## 2.1.5. Structure of Master thesis

During Master thesis writing, students go through a long process, which is shown in Picture 2.



**Picture 2. Master thesis writing process**

More information: Walliman, N. S. R. *Social Research Methods. SAGE Course Companions*. Sage Publications, Ltd., 2006, p. 6.

The same process should be reflected in the Master thesis structure, which consists of a title page, content, introduction, vocabulary of main concepts, scientific literature review, methodology, empirical data analysis, conclusions, recommendations, list for references, summary, annexes (Table 13).

**Table 13. Master thesis structure requirements**

Master thesis structure	Master thesis structure requirements
Title page	<p>A title page includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ the name of the university;</li> <li>✓ the name of the faculty, department/institute;</li> <li>✓ the name and the surname of the student;</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ the name of the study programme;</li> <li>✓ the level of the study programme;</li> <li>✓ the supervisor's name and surname, her/his pedagogical name and scientific degree;</li> <li>✓ city and Master thesis preparation year.</li> </ul> <p>An example is presented in Annex 1.</p>
Content		<p>Content includes all titles of sections and subsections, page numbers where they start. Sections and subsections of theoretical and empirical parts are numbered using Arabic numbers; content, introduction, conclusions, recommendations, the list of references and annexes have to be presented as independent structural parts, which are not numerated. Titles of sections are written in capital letters, titles of subsections – in a sentence case. An example is presented in Annex 2.</p>
Introduction		<p>Introduction includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ the research problem;</li> <li>✓ relevance of the topic;</li> <li>✓ novelty of the topic based on an overview of previous researches;</li> <li>✓ practical and/or theoretical value of the paper;</li> <li>✓ the object;</li> <li>✓ the goal and objectives;</li> <li>✓ the hypothesis or research questions;</li> <li>✓ research methods;</li> <li>✓ a brief overview of the paper's structure.</li> </ul>
Vocabulary of the main concepts		<p>The main keywords have to be defined referring to the sources.</p>
Report part	Scientific literature review	<p>Theoretical section includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ theories, concepts and models, which explain the analysed problem;</li> <li>✓ explanations of the categories investigated in the empirical thesis part.</li> </ul> <p>This section can be divided into subsections.</p>
	Methodology	<p>This section explains the way in which empirical research has been implemented, describes and justifies the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ type of the research (qualitative, quantitative);</li> <li>✓ sampling procedure;</li> <li>✓ sampling procedure;</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ data collecting methods (including data collecting instrument);</li> <li>✓ data analysis methods;</li> <li>✓ ethical issues;</li> <li>✓ limitations of the research.</li> </ul>
	Empirical data analysis	In this section, data collected during the empirical research are described and analysed and/or interpreted.
Conclusions		Conceptual conclusions should correspond to the research objectives and answer the research question/hypothesis.
Recommendations		Recommendations should be specific, based on the results and have a clear address.
Summary		Summary is written in English and describes the main characteristics of the Master thesis: its title, goal, objectives, methods, results. Keywords are defined. The summary is composed of 2000-2500 words with spaces (1 page).
List of references		It includes articles, monographs, dissertations and other publications no older than ten years. All publications mentioned in the text should be included in the list of references. The list of references should be prepared according to bibliographical requirements. An example is presented in Annex 3.
Annexes		At the end of the thesis, annexes can be presented. It is obligatory to put in the annexes the data collecting instrument, in the case of interviewing – transcriptions. Additional information provided in the annexes is optional. The annexes should be numbered and named.

The length of the Master thesis is 60-70 pages (not including the title page, content, list of references, annexes), typed Times New Roman 12 pt font size and having 1,5 spaces. Margins are as follows: left side – 3 cm, right side – 1,5 cm, top and bottom – 2 cm. It should be printed on A4 size one side paper and binded.

Pages should be numbered from the title page; page number on the title page is not shown. It is recommended to write page numbers on the left of the bottom.

Master thesis is structured in sections and subsections. Each section starts on a new page. Subsections could start on the same page, separated with an additional space interval. The title of any section is written in capital letters, the title of any subsection – in a sentence type. Titles and subtitles are placed at the center. Subsections are numbered only inside sections. There is no point mark put at the end of sections and subsections.



- *During the assessment of the structure, attention is paid to the following:*
  - *are there all required structural parts,*
  - *is the length of the paper in according to the requirements,*
  - *does the text correspond to titles of sections and subsections.*

*Mykolas Romeris University studies procedure, 2011*

Content, introduction, conclusions, recommendations, the list of references and annexes start on a new page and are not numbered, whereas titles are written in capital letters and are placed in the center. Annexes are numbered inside the section and have titles, and each annex starts on a new page.



### Questions and tasks

✓ Read Master thesis, topic of which is connected with your topic, and analyse its structure. Does it correspond to formal requirements? What is missing? What can you learn from that?

## 2.2. Content of Master thesis



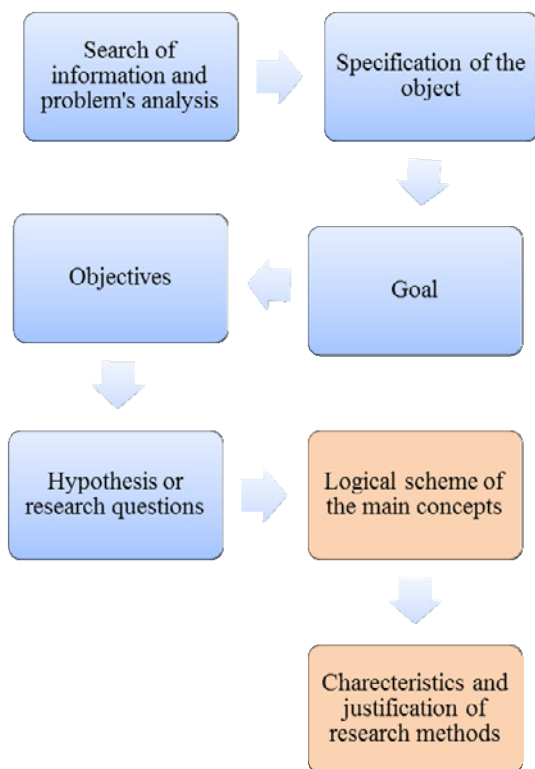
### 2.2.1. Introduction

Introduction is a conceptual text presenting the essence of the Master thesis. Analysis of the most important scientific information should be used in the introduction. As the introduction is limited to a maximum of

three pages, it cannot include general or well known information, or start analysing the topic from far away. As it was mentioned earlier, it includes:

- ✓ the research problem,
- ✓ relevance of the topic,
- ✓ novelty of the topic based on an overview of previous researches,
- ✓ practical and/or theoretical value of the paper,
- ✓ the object,
- ✓ the goal and objectives,
- ✓ the hypothesis or research questions,
- ✓ research methods,
- ✓ a brief overview of the paper's structure.

Logical content of an introduction is shown in Picture 3.



Picture 3. Matrix of introduction

Every Master thesis is based on a research problem analysis. A research problem is a contradiction, which arises in a professional field in the interaction of people and needs a theoretical and/or practical solution. It shows that there is lack of reliable information for an explanation of that contradiction; therefore, a new research, e.g., Master thesis, is needed. The research problem should be:

- ✓ relevant,
- ✓ innovative;
- ✓ it should have practical and/or theoretical value.



***Well formulated research problem reveals the essence of Master thesis and together with its goal and objectives are preconditions for a good Master thesis. It should be relevant, innovative and lead to solutions; however, it should be accessible for a student to investigate.***

***A problem can be defined in a text or formulated in problem questions.***

Relevance of the topic is based on analysis of scientific literature, research, statistical data, legal documents and other sources of information. Relevance of the research could be based (but not limited) on such aspects:

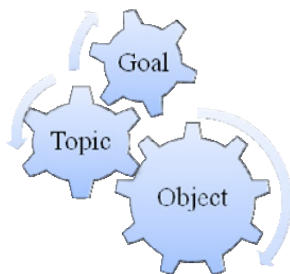
- ✓ needs of society, community, group or individuals;
- ✓ social changes;
- ✓ challenges for professional practice;
- ✓ lack of data;
- ✓ not investigated issue;
- ✓ a new problem or challenge, etc.

Master thesis should demonstrate novelty in one way or another. It should be clearly defined how it differs from previously done research. Novelty could be investigating a new aspect in the topic, interviewing a new target group, etc. As social work Master thesis is in a close connection with the professional field, it should bring not only theoretical, but also practical value, e.g., to be significant to social work theory and practice. Practical significance is reflected not only in the text, but in recommendations as well.

The research object is a social work phenomenon, which is theoretically and empirically investigated. It could be social work activity, process,

challenge, etc. Individuals or groups usually are not research objects, but their interaction could be defined as such. The research problem and the object are closely related – the research problem is a question about the research object, to which there is no scientific answer.

The goal and objectives show the direction of the Master thesis. The goal is short, conceptual, but at the same time it is a specific sentence about a desired research result. The goal has to correspond but not to repeat the topic of the Master thesis. It follows from the research problem and reflects the research object (Picture 4).



Picture 4. Interconnection of goal, topic and object

The goal is written in a new line and starts with the following phrases: *The goal is ...*, or *the goal – ...*. Keywords for continuing a sentence could be the following: *to analyse, identify, compare, assess, evaluate, etc.*

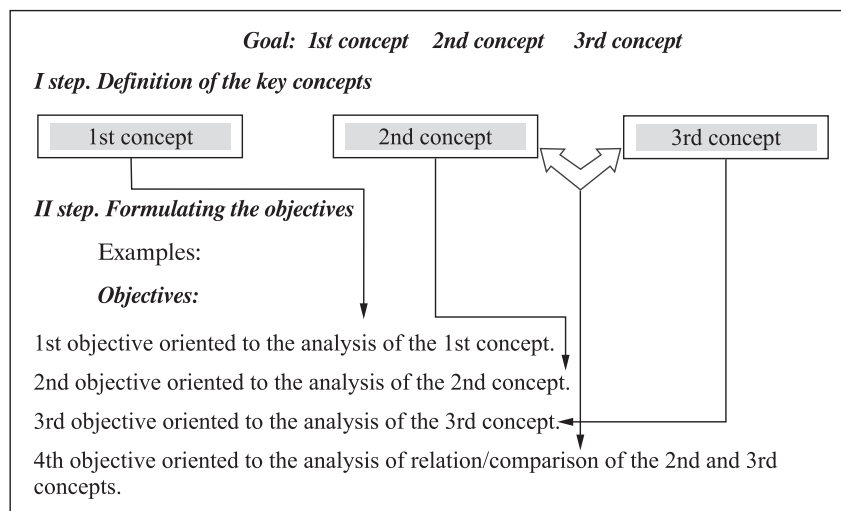


**Avoid in the formulation of the goal:**

- conjunction “and”,
- word by word repetition of the topic,
- defining research time, place or sampling.

After the goal formulation, objectives follow. The objectives define what we should do in order to achieve the goal. They are like steps, which lead to a desired result expressed in the goal. It is recommended to formulate 3-4 objectives, starting from theoretical and moving to empirical. Every objective points to an interim result and is in a close connection with the goal. There are many ways how to connect the goal and the objectives. For example, if

your goal is about a different concepts analysis, you can use matrix which is shown in Picture 5.



Picture 5. Interconnection of goal and objectives

Every objective starts in a new line. It is numbered and formulated in a scientific style. Remember that an answer to every objective should be provided in the conclusions and recommendations, if any.



**Avoid in the formulation of the objectives:**

- repetition of the goal,
- defining stages of research, e.g., literature review, provide recommendations, etc.

Every Master thesis should have a hypothesis or a research question. It is recommended (but not necessary) that hypotheses would be formulated in the quantitative research and questions in the qualitative research. The hypothesis is an implied answer to the research problem; it shows the main idea which guides the researcher. The goal of the research is to confirm or deny the hypothesis. The hypotheses are formulated based on facts and are an essential element of the quantitative research. Research questions are



specification of the problem and show what the researcher is looking for, what he is investigating.

Used theoretical (scientific literature review, generalization, etc.) and empirical (survey, interview, observation, documents analysis, etc) research methods should be briefly described in the introduction. Data analysis (descriptive, inferential statistics; qualitative data analysis) methods are named, as well.

An introduction ends with a brief description of the Master thesis structure (number of thesis' pages; numbers of structural parts, pictures and tables, references, etc.)



***The main criteria of the introduction's assessment are the following:***

- *justification of relevance, novelty, practical and theoretical value;*
- *interconnection of the topic, object, goal, objectives, hypotheses or research questions.*



### **Questions and tasks**

1. Read publically available Master thesis which topic is closely related to your chosen topic and assess how it meets all requirements for the introduction.
2. Read two articles from the research journal "Social Work" (<https://www3.mruni.eu/ojs/social-work/issue/archive>) related to your Master thesis topic and assess the interconnection of the topic, object, goal, objectives, hypotheses or research questions.

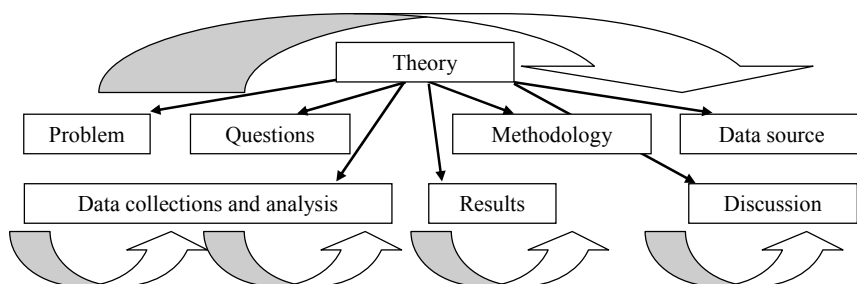


### **2.2.2. Theoretical part**

The theoretical part is composed from several sections and subsections, each of them is a thematically relatively independent text, e.g., each section and subsection has to discuss a separate topic, an aspect of the research problem, or correspond to the objective. Sections and subsections consistently follow

each other. They have to be of approximately the same length and no shorter than 1–1,5 page. Sections and subsections should have specific titles, which do not repeat a bigger unit (e.g., the title of subsection is more specific than the section's title; the title of section is more specific than the title of the theoretical part). On the other hand, the key concepts from the title of the Master thesis should be reflected in sections' and subsections' titles and texts in one way or another. Integrity of the theoretical part is one of the main criteria of its assessment.

The essence of this section is the theoretical analysis of the topic under study. Social scientific theory and research are linked through two logical methods: deduction (which involves the derivation of expectations or hypothesis from theories) or induction (which involves development of generalizations from specific observations). Theory is understood as a systematic explanation for a set of facts. The importance of theory in research is shown in Picture 6.



**Picture 6. Role of theory in practice**

More information: Garner, M., Wagner, C., and Kawulich, B. *Teaching Research Methods in the Social Sciences*. Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009, p. 30-40.

The theoretical part includes analysis of social work scientific literature, legal documents, research. It is not recommended to use textbooks in the Master thesis. Scientific sources could be primary and secondary. Primary scientific sources are monographs, science study, research papers in peer reviewed journals, conference proceedings. Secondary sources are textbooks, reference books, encyclopaedias. 90% of references in the Master thesis should be primary sources. It is recommended to use no older than ten years literature.



● ***Plan your time carefully. Make sure that you have enough time not only for writing the theoretical part, but also to revise it. You constantly should come back to a written text.***

***It is suggested not to write all theoretical part at once. It is better to take notes for every smaller topic and after that to use these notes for writing the theoretical part.***

***It is important to create notes taking and storing system so that you could quickly find necessary resources.***

***It is valuable to visualise the text in pictures, schemes, tables.***

***Dačiulytė, Jagminas and Nefas, 2013***

The theoretical part is based on the analysis of the newest scientific literature, which is closely related to the research topic. There are several ways to present analysed literature, most popular of which is problematic, the easiest – chronological. This part should be analytical, it is not enough to describe it, so an in-depth analysis should be done.

Every section and subsection starts with an explanation what it will be about, what is the aim of the text, and it ends with a summary. The summary is written in a new paragraph and could start using phrases, such as *in summary*, *summing up*, *in general*. The summary is not only a generalization of the text, it is more like interim conclusions; therefore, it should be abstract, conceptual.

### **Guidance of academic writing**

The theoretical part is written according to academic writing rules, e.g., a scientific style.



● ***A scientific style is used for writing scientific publications: articles, doctoral dissertations, monographs, textbooks. The function of the scientific style is first of all communicative, e.g. to share or disseminate scientific information. This style differs from others, especially from fiction literature, which is emotional and picturesque. Scientific language is abstract. It describes and analyses problems.***

***The scientific style uses noun forms for abstract concepts, adjectives, which define abstract characteristics, and verbs, which define abstract processes.***

*Long sentences connected by conjunctions are often used. Impersonal, passive sentences, schemes, tables, charts, references, footnotes, quotations help to provide scientific information. Exclamatory and rhetoric sentences are not usual for the style. Another trait of this style is professional accuracy and conciseness.*

*A scientific text is impersonal, there could not be any subjectivity, emotions, a personal point of view, and therefore, this style is associated with objectivity. The scientific text should be logical. One idea follows from another. The text is consistent, comprehensive, at the same time clear and understandable for a reader.*

*The sentences should express an idea as precisely as possible. Every word has its strict meaning; there is no place for ambiguity. Professional vocabulary, international concepts are used. As science develops, new terms occur.*

*Bitinienė, 2013*

Master thesis is written according to the same requirements as a scientific article. Of course, a Master student is not a professional researcher yet, but he has to demonstrate academic writing skills.



*Scientific papers are used for the analysis of scientific problems which are relevant for the scientific community. There are many different problems in social reality, but not all of them are related to science, e.g., influence of astrology to well-being of social work clients is not a scientific problem; therefore, it could not be addressed in research.*

#### Argumentation

*It is obligatory to provide arguments in the scientific text. In other words, any idea of a researcher should be presented in scientific arguments. Reasoning should be based on professional knowledge: theory, empirical research results, concepts, etc. It is not acceptable to use everyday language or fiction arguments, e.g., mass media texts, common sense arguments, etc.*

#### Analytic and critical thinking

*Academic writing is an ability to apply, but not only to retell knowledge. An original work could not be written in a textbook style. Analysis of professional theories should be analytical; the goal of the researcher is to reveal the relation between the theory and the investigated problem, to argument that the chosen theory is the best for the problem analysis.*

***Scientific texts include analysis of different perspectives, contradictions, alternatives, to discuss pros and cons. The researcher should demonstrate that he is able to assess critically not only others arguments, but also his reasoning. Critical thinking is an integral part of academic writing.***

**Purposefulness**

***A scientific text should have a clear direction in analysing the problem. Every structural part should be in a close relation with other parts and connected with the main topic. The text should not include any irrelevant additional information, even if it is interesting. The researcher should always ask himself how this section or subsection relates with the research problem.***

***Maslauskaitė, 2008***

In the theoretical part, a student should demonstrate his critical thinking, an ability to conceptualize, write an analytical text. However, it is recommended not to involve in sharp discussions with referenced authors. Science could not develop without critique and reflection, but any disagreement with the authors should be reasoned and justified.



**Questions and tasks**

1. Read and compare the following extracts from texts. Do the texts follow the requirements of academic writing? Prove your answer (Table 14).

**Table 14. Extracts from texts**

<p>Juvenile delinquency is a prediction of the general delinquency, its potential reserve and forecasted model of the future. Research data shows the earlier delinquency is prevented the biggest possibility do diminish delinquency in the future.</p> <p>After Independence reconstitution in Lithuania, it became necessary to improve juvenile justice system in order to humanize the sanctions applied to the juvenile delinquents. The Law on Minimal and Average Care of the Child of the Republic of Lithuania accepted in 2007 played a key role in the</p>	<p>Researchers on problems of Lithuanian educational science and education practitioners explain school learner's attitude to learning through internalisation of values in the process of education. Values, as an integral part of education process, are analysed by a big number of Lithuanian scientists (Šalkauskis, 1991; Laužikas, 1993; Jovaiša, 1995; Bitinas, 1995, 2000, 2004; Martišauskienė, 1997, 2006, 2009; Barkauskaitė, 2003; Dževečka, 2003; Vasiliauskas, 2005; Aramavičiūtė, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009).</p>
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development of modern juvenile justice system. The Law stipulated the procedure for the assignment of minimal and average care mean for a child who has behavioural problems and is vulnerable for crime. According to the Law when average care mean is appointed to a child, s/he lives and is educated in closed institution – Socialization centre. There were six socialization centres in Lithuania in 2012.

In order to ensure the efficiency of the average child care mean and successful social integration of the child, it is especially important that child's parents (guardians) would actively cooperate with a socialization centre and would participate in the implementation of the average care mean. The Law defines the obligation of socialization centres and the responsibility of parents (guardians) to keep relationships with a child, emphasis children right to keep in touch with the family and other relatives if it does not contradict to his/her interests.

Family plays the key role in child's socialization process, causes the development of child's personality. Scientists from various disciplines (sociology, psychology, pedagogy) claim the importance of family to the socialization of children and youth. Criminological researches show that "people who commit crime differ from the rest of society, they usually are from the risk families". The relations in the family could cause aggressive, delinquent behaviour of teenagers. It relates with economic and spiritual activities, is considered as a unique social institution and the main educational environment for a child where care is taken and his/her behaviour is formed and controlled, it could prevent juvenile delinquency by creating strong interrelationships and providing meaningful roles and responsibilities.

*Specially adapted text for this issue*

According to representatives of classic pedagogy (Šalkauskis, 1991; Laužikas, 1993), a teacher is understood as an educator and a conveyer of values; therefore, a particular attention is paid to reveal the relation of values with pedagogical reality.

Foreign researchers (Fiske, 1949; Tupes and Christal, 1961; Cattell, 1970; Coldberg, 1970; Rokeach, 1977; McLaughlinas, 1997; Lickona, 1991; Beachum and Cray, 2005) have approached the value orientation as a consequence of self-dependent search of learners themselves. In their works they argue that internalisation of values is development of individual's character, creation of "the Self". Such attitude towards value internalisation in the process of education serves as basic pedagogical conception in Europe.

Representatives of psychology apply this notion to explain the process how an individual adopts values, social attitudes, norms, behaviour patterns of social groups and perceives them as own. Such definition of internalisation is conceptually different from the one suggested by the representatives of social psychology (Mead, 1934; Suslavičius, 2006; Немов, Алтунина, 2008; Myers, 2008; Legkauskas, 2008; Bless, 2004). The representatives of social psychology devote particular attention to interaction of internalisation and socialisation. It should be emphasised that that socialisation is a cornerstone striving for clarification of the value internalisation paradigm in the process of education. Internalisation is perceived as realisation of external stimuli/elements and their becoming an internal quality of an individual.

*V. Suboč, 2011*

2. Read an article from the research journal “Social Work” (<https://www3.mruni.eu/ojs/social-work/issue/archive>) which topic is related to your Master thesis and analyse the text according to academic writing requirements.
3. While reading scientific literature and taking notes, the first draft of the theoretical part is prepared. It is constantly reviewed, updated, edited. Write the draft of your theoretical part according to the provided recommendations.

### **Guidance of referencing**

Reference list at the end of the Master thesis should include only those sources which have been read by the author and referred in the text.

References are provided in a format “author-date”. General rules are the following ones:

- If the reference is in the text, it is written in brackets in an original language and followed by a publication year, e.g. (Pivorienė, 2014);
- If there are three or more authors, the surname of the first author is written, adding “at al”, e.g., (Indrašienė et al., 2013);
- If the source does not have an author, the title of the reference or organization is written, e.g., (Ministry of Labor and Social Security, 2012);
- If there are different authors with the same names, initials are used;
- If there are several authors, their names and publication years are separated with a semicolon, e.g., (Merfeldaitė, 2012; Jegelevičienė, 2011);
- If there are different sources of the same author of different years, the sources are provided chronologically, e.g., (Merfeldaitė, 2013; Merfeldaitė, 2014);
- If there are many sources of the same author of the same year, they are differentiated using a, b, c, etc., e.g., (Indrašienė, 2014a; Indrašienė, 2014b);
- If there are several sources, they are listed chronologically, e.g., (Indrašienė, 2010; Pivorienė, 2011; Merfeldaitė, 2012; Jegelevičienė, 2014);
- If quoting the author, the quotation is written in quotation marks, and the page from which the quotation is taken should be indicated, e.g., (Pivorienė, 2013, p.13);
- If using the author from secondary resources, it should be noted that s/he is quoted from secondary sources, e.g., “Indrašienė said (quote from Jegelevičienė, 2013), that...”.



**Quote only when it is necessary. Do not use too long quotations. When you quote, you use exact writing as in an original text. If you want to shorten the quote, use (...).**



### Questions and tasks

1. After the approval of the Master thesis topic, you should start to review literature and draft the theoretical part. In order not to forget anything, it is important to start writing bibliography at the early stage of thesis writing. One tool to do that is presented below. Fill it in after reading any information related to your topic (Table 15).

**Table 15. Bibliography with comments**

Name and surname of the author	Title	Publishing year and place	Total number of pages (if all issue is used) or specific number of pages (if parts or articles are used)
Quotation or paraphrasing related to the topic, page			
Quotation or paraphrasing related to the topic, page			

2. List the keywords of your research (which appear in the goal, objectives, hypothesis or research questions, titles of sections and subsections) and describe them referring to different authors (Table 16).

**Table 16. Keywords table**

Keyword	Definition	Author

3. Look at your Master thesis and check references filling in Table 17. Discuss the Table with your supervisor.



**Table 17. References checking table**

<b>It is a reference</b>	<b>There is no reference or it is incorrect</b>	<b>How it is presented/ how it should be presented</b>



### 2.2.3. Methodology

In this section, research methods are described. They are chosen depending on the research topic and methodology. This section explains a way empirical research has been implemented, describes and justifies the following:

- ✓ The type of the research (qualitative, quantitative),
- ✓ sampling procedure,
- ✓ data collecting methods (including data collecting instrument),
- ✓ data analysis methods,
- ✓ ethical issues,
- ✓ limitations of the research.

Before presenting empirical data, methodology and methods should be described. Research methodology is a theoretical concepts/models and assumptions, which help to understand better the research problem and to plan research. It is necessary to define what theories are used in the Master thesis and why. Discuss relations of theories/models and assumptions: how they complement or contradict each other.



***In order to investigate in depth a phenomenon under study, mixed research, combining qualitative and quantitative research methods, or triangulation, combining several methods of the same kind (e.g., quantitative) could be used.***

First of all, a qualitative or quantitative type of research should be defined. All textbooks include their definitions and descriptions. In general, it could be said that in the quantitative research a researcher works with

several variables and many cases, whereas in qualitative – with several cases and many variables.

The next step is to describe sampling, which includes a sampling type, the definition of population and sampling frames in the quantitative research, sampling criteria in the qualitative research, the description of a sample. Chosen sampling methods should be justified: why it is the best method for the Master thesis, what are its advantages and disadvantages.

Sampling is a process of selecting research participants. It is necessary to know a minimum number of participants for a particular research, so that after data collection sound generalizations could be made.

Sampling process in qualitative and quantitative research differs. Probability sampling is recommended for the quantitative research, while nonprobability samplings are a characteristic of the qualitative research.



• *A basic principle of probability sampling is that sample will be a representative of the population from which it is selected if all members of the population have an equal chance of being selected in the sample. The main probability sampling concepts are:*

- *an element is that unit about which information is collected and that provides the basis for analysis. In survey, research elements are people;*
- *population is the theoretically specified aggregation of study elements;*
- *study population is that aggregation of elements from which the sample is actually selected;*
- *a sampling frame is the actual list of sampling units, from which the sample is selected;*
- *sample (sometimes defined as a unit of data collection) is elements or aggregation of elements from which information is collected.*

*Rubin and Babbie, 1993*



• *In qualitative research, controlled sampling techniques are normally inappropriate, and nonprobability sampling techniques are more likely to be used.*

*Rubin and Babbie, 1993*

The next step is a description of data collecting technique (survey, interviewing, observation, etc.) and data collecting instrument (questionnaire, interview, observation protocol, etc.).

Data analysis techniques should be described in detail, e.g., in quantitative research used descriptive and/or inferential statistics should be defined, whereas in qualitative research the process of content analysis should be described.

It is recommended to define research limitations. It could be lack of literature time restrictions, sampling difficulties, etc. The definition of limitations shows a high consciousness of a researcher.

Ethical issues also should be discussed in this part. It is required that at least anonymity or confidentiality would be addressed in the research.



***Anonymity refers to the situation in which even the researcher cannot identify specific information with the individuals it describes. Confidentiality refers to the situation in which the researcher, knowing which data describes which subject, guarantees to keep information confidential. Therefore, an interview never could be anonymous.***

Social work research often, though not always, represents an intrusion into people's life. Participation in the research disturbs their regular activities. Moreover, the research often requires people to reveal personal information. Therefore, a general rule is that all research participants must be *informed* of all consequences of the study and must *consent* to participate in it.



***In addition to technical, scientific considerations, social work research projects are likely to be shaped by administrative, ethical and political considerations.***

***What is ethically "right" and "wrong" in research is ultimately a matter of what people agree is right and wrong.***

***Scientists agree that participation in research should be voluntary. This norm, however, could conflict with the scientific need for generalizability.***

***Research should not harm those who participate in it, unless they willingly and knowingly accept the risk of harm.***

***Rubin and Babbie, 1993, p. 85-86***



## Questions and tasks

1. Using different textbooks fill in Table 18 and compare qualitative and quantitative research.

**Table 18. Comparison of qualitative and quantitative research**

Characteristics	Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Aim of the research		
Object		
Context		
Role of the researcher		
Sampling		
Data analysis		

2. Read five articles from the research journal “Social Work” (<https://www3.mruni.eu/ojs/social-work/issue/archive>) and find how research ethic is described. What specific issues are defined? Which are defined in all articles? Which are only in some?
3. Read two articles from the research journal “Social Work” (<https://www3.mruni.eu/ojs/social-work/issue/archive>), one based on qualitative research, another one – on quantitative research. What are differences in describing methods and presenting data?



## 2.2.4. Empirical part

Research results are presented in the empirical part. The results should be presented in a wide social context, they have to be analysed and interpreted in the connection with theoretical issues, discussed in the theoretical part. The results should be related with the research questions and/or hypothesis and answer to the empirical objective(s) of the Master thesis. It is recommended to discuss how the findings relate with previous research, what could be directions for future investigations.

There are two main ways of empirical data presentation. Data could be described and after that analysed in a separate subsection or data could be described and analysed all together. In any case, during data description it is recommended to visualise the findings in tables and pictures (diagrams, charts, etc.), whereas during data analysis and/or interpretation an analytical text should dominate. There are several rules for visualising data.



**It is important to choose an appropriate form for data presentation. If you want to compare many findings, the best way is to present them in tables, if there are a few – in pictures.**

**Visualisation of findings should be well organized: diagrams should point to tendencies, tables should highlight the main elements.**

**The best way for a reader to understand is to present no more than 3 variables in a linear diagram, 4 in a pie diagram, 7 in a column diagram.**

**You should think carefully which data you would like to visualise and how.**  
**Dačiulytė, Jagminas and Nefas, 2013**

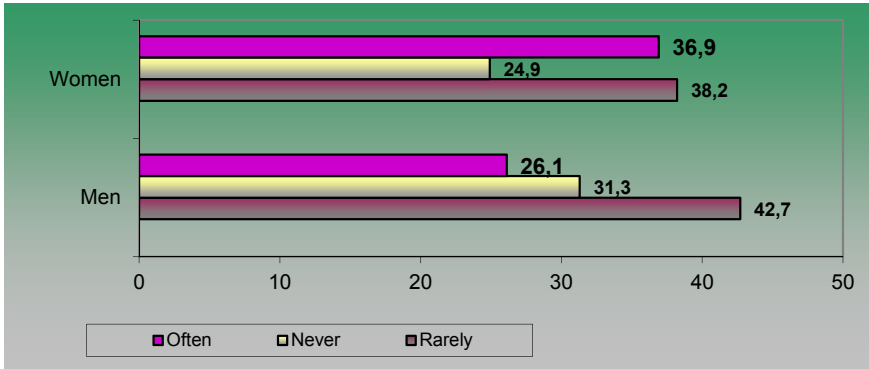
Tables and pictures are numbered in Arabic numbers consistently threw all thesis. If there is only one table in the paper, it is not numbered, just named Table. The title of the table is written in a sentence case above it in 12 font sizes, highlighted and centered. Lines and columns start from a capital letter. The table should be aligned consistently (e.g., all centered or all left / right) (Table 19).

**Table 19. Distribution of respondents according to gender and age (n=439)**

	<b>20-40 years</b>	<b>40-65 years</b>	<b>In total</b>
Men	22 (23,2 %)	73 (76,8 %)	95 (100 %)
Women	169 (49,1 %)	175 (50,9 %)	344 (100 %)
In total	191 (43,5 %)	248 (56,5 %)	439 (100 %)

It is recommended that the whole table would be in the same page. In the case if the table is very big, at the end of the page right alignment, it should be written “continuation of Table 1 in the next page” and in the next page – “continuation of Table 1”. It is possible to use abbreviations in tables. Then they have to be explained after the table using 10 font size.

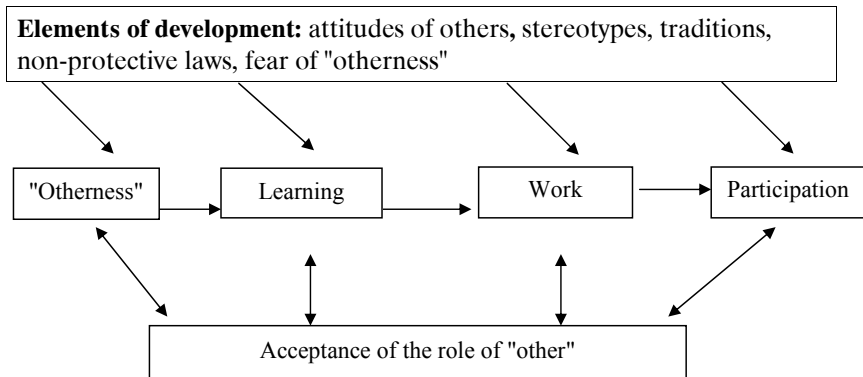
Pictures are numbered as well, the title is written at the bottom of the picture in a sentences case, highlighted, using 12 font size (Picture 7).



**Picture 7.** Assessment of consultations at school according to gender (%)

If the table or the picture is taken from other sources, it should be written at the bottom of the table or the picture in 10 font size (Picture 8).

If the table or the picture is adapted from another source, at the bottom the author of the source, year and page should be written, e.g., “adapted from Daugėla, 2003, p. 34”. If the table or the picture is based on another source, at the bottom the author of the source and year should be written “based on Žalimienė, 2007”.



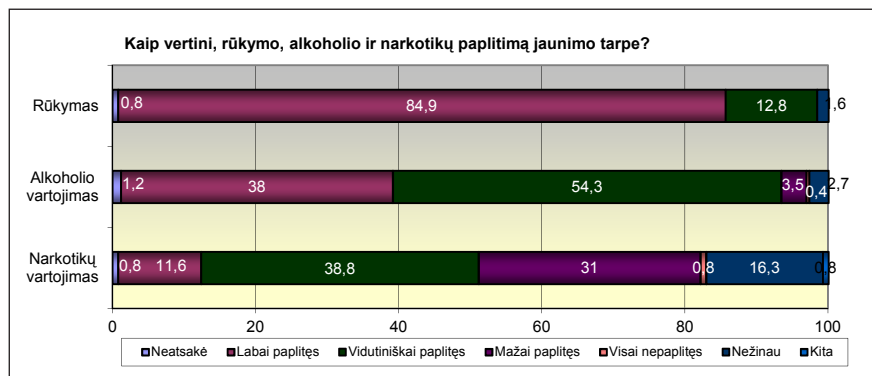
**Picture 8.** Social exclusion and acceptance of the role of “other”

Source: Bagdonas et al., 2007, p. 27



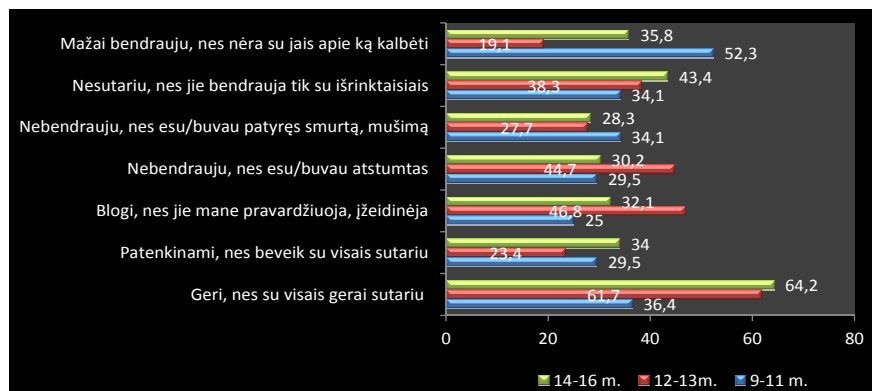
### *The most common mistakes of quantitative data presentation:*

Choosing not appropriate colours is one of the most common mistakes of data presentation (Picture 9).



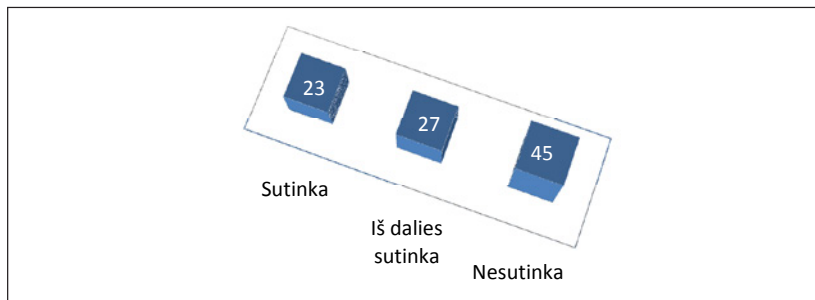
Picture 9. Not appropriate colours

Choosing not appropriate colour of background is another mistake, which is common when presenting data (Picture 10).



Picture 10. Not appropriate colour of background

**Selecting not appropriate type of a diagram is also one of the most common mistakes in data presentation (Picture 11).**



**Picture 11. Not appropriate type of a diagram**

When presenting qualitative data, quotes from interviews are used. If quotation is longer than one line, it starts in a new line, written in italics, using 10 font size. If the quotation is shorter, it is written in the text using 12 font size in italics and with quotation marks.

It is recommended to end sections and subsections of the empirical part writing summaries. The empirical part as a whole should be summarised, as well.



***Check for grammar mistakes, style, layout, as well as do a very careful proof reading.***

The date of finishing the Master thesis and the signature is written on the last page of the thesis. Two envelopes (for a reviewer and a CD) are pasted at the end.



### **Questions and tasks**

1. Read two articles in the research journal “Social Work” (<https://www3.mruni.eu/ojs/social-work/issue/archive>) and analyse how empirical data is presented. Check the presentation of empirical data in your Master thesis.





## 2.2.5. Conclusions and recommendations

Conclusions are based on the research results, correspond to the goal and objectives, and answer the research question or the hypothesis. They have to be conceptual, clear and laconic. There should not be any numbers, percentages or quotations from interviews in the conclusions. They should not contain any new information. Every new conclusion should be written in a new line and numbered.

Recommendations are provided after the conclusions in a new section. They have to be closely connected with the Master thesis, have clear address and be specific and feasible.



***Well formulated recommendations strengthen the practical significance of the Master thesis.***



## Questions and tasks

1. Read two articles in the research journal “Social Work” (<https://www3.mruni.eu/ojs/social-work/issue/archive>) and look at the conclusions, analyse their connection with the text, their level of abstraction.

## 2.3. Defence and assessment of Master thesis



### 2.3.1. Preparation for Master thesis presentation

A good presentation is as important as the Master thesis. The aim of the presentation is to present the paper in the best possible way. Take enough time for its preparation.

The recommended structure of the presentation is as follows:

- ✓ Self-presentation;

- ✓ The topic of the Master thesis;
- ✓ The object, goal, objectives, methods;
- ✓ Generalised research results;
- ✓ Conclusions and recommendations.



***Do not start talking till your audience sees the first slide.***

Before starting to prepare the presentation, it is suggested to prepare a plan of the presentation: put only the main parts of information, essential points, and only after that decide how to prepare it visually. Illustrations are required for the presentation, as well.

There are four main characteristics for a successful presentation: the size of the text and its simplicity, clarity, consistency.

- ✓ Size of the text. Visual material of the presentation should be well seen for an audience. The most suitable size of letters is 32-48 pt.
- ✓ Simplicity. On a slide, only essential statements of the presentation should be given, which will be discussed. The audience has to understand the essence of the information in the first 5 seconds.
  - In one slide, it has to be no more than 6 lines of the text;
  - In one line of the text, it has to be no more than 7 words;
  - It is advised not to show several slides with the text in succession.
- ✓ Clarity. When it is difficult to see and read the information on the slides, then the audience tries to find out what is written there instead of listening to a speaker. It is important to choose a correct combination of font, size and colours of slides. The most effective and traditional fonts are Helvetica and Arial; also, bold words are used to highlight the text, but not Italics. It is recommended to present only one subject on one slide.
- ✓ Consistency. It is important to choose one visual style: font, combination of colours, highlighting of important concepts must be maintained the same in the entire text. Information given on the slides has to flow logically and consistently. The presentation may start and finish with the same slide, where information is summarized. At the beginning, it introduces to the presentation's content and relevance of the analysed

problem, whereas at the end of the presentation, the summary of the main conclusions is provided.

It is useful to follow these advices when making a PowerPoint presentation:

- ✓ **Slides background – as simple as it can be.** Use as few colours as possible not to make slides too colourful. The best option is a white or very dark background, which is clearly visible in any conditions;
- ✓ **Appropriate and good illustration – more effective than the text point by point.** Human brains react to illustration more sensitively than to a text.



### 2.3.2. Defence of Master thesis

A supervisor of Master thesis decides if the Master thesis is appropriate for defence. A student is responsible for the content of his Master thesis.

According to the Procedure for the assessment of Mykolas Romeris University study outcome (2012) upon supervisor's approval of the prepared final thesis, a student shall be obliged to upload it on the University's information system "Studies" not later than within 10 business days before the defence, and the supervisor shall mark in the system his consent for the defence of the work. Upon supervisor's prohibition to defend the work, the student shall be entitled to apply to the chairman of the Committee who shall take a decision regarding the permit to defend the work. The Committee shall appoint a reviewer, who will be also marked in the information system "Studies". Two bound copies of the final thesis signed by the author and the supervisor shall be submitted to the Committee. Two envelopes for the entry of the supervisor's comments and review shall be attached on the internal side of the cover of the final thesis. Two weeks before until the beginning of the defence of the final theses, the Committees shall draw timetables approved by the dean for the meetings of the final theses defence qualification commission and foresee the procedure and place of the defence. The reviewer shall upload on the information system "Studies" a review, in which he shall positively or negatively assess the work, at least 2 days before the defence. Access to the review shall be provided to the author of the work, his supervisor and members of the defence commission. Only final theses that have gone through the formal counter-plagiarism check shall be defended.

Final theses shall be defended in the open meeting of the final theses qualification commission.

At the time of the defence, the author of the final thesis shall briefly (up to 10 minutes) introduce his work while reviewing the problem of the research, aim/aims and hypothesis (if any) of the work, the research object, results of the research obtained, reliability of the methods applied, present the findings and recommendations and substantiate them. After that, a review shall be presented. The author of the final thesis shall answer to the submitted comments followed by the questions of the qualification commission and other persons taking part in the defence. The supervisor of the work shall speak at the end of the defence. If the supervisor is not able to take part in the defence meeting, he shall submit his comment in writing. If the reviewer does not participate in the meeting, his review shall be read by one of the members of the commission. If the reviewer assesses the final thesis, participation of the supervisor and the reviewer shall be mandatory in the defence meeting. Final theses and their defence shall be assessed by the members of the final theses defence commission. The final grade of the work shall be set by deriving the mean of the grades of the members of the commission and entered in the defence protocol, the title page of the work and defence sheet in the information system "Studies".



***Preparation of work and the scientific level are assessed by the following: Substantiation of the relevance and significance of the selected theme, formulation of the theme, clarity of the research objective, tasks and hypothesis/hypotheses, author's knowledge of the latest works of researchers, appropriateness of the research methods, significance and statistical reliability of the data, level of interpretation of the results of the research, conformity of the findings with the tasks and their validity; integrity, completeness of the content (it shall be assessed whether all compulsory elements of the structure of the work are in place, appropriateness of the scope of the work and balance of the scope of structural parts, conformity of the parts with the text); quality of execution (quality of the prints, visual material, scholarliness, logic, accuracy and laconic of the language, appropriate presentation of the tables of the results, appropriate presentation of pictures, questionnaires, lists of interlocutors, appropriate presentation of statistical data, accuracy of citing sources of literature, quality of the presentation of the bibliographical description.***

***Procedure for the assessment of  
Mykolas Romeris University study outcome, 2012***

Criteria and weighted coefficients of the final thesis and its assessment shall be as follows:

- ✓ Preparation of work, scientific level, weighted coefficient – 0,60;
- ✓ Quality of the defence (the ability of the student to present the work, quality of the presentation, the ability to answer the questions), weighted coefficient – 0, 40.

The description of Master thesis assessment is as follows:

10 (*excellent*) – an excellent, exceptional, comprehensive paper;

9 (*very well*) – a sound, good, comprehensive paper resolving the research problem, there are minor, not essential deficiencies;

8 (*well*) – a good paper, there are minor deficiencies in the analysis of the research problem or the paper structure or academic writing mistakes;

7 (*average*) – a paper which requires further development, there are deficiencies in the analysis of the research problem, structural or methodological shortcomings and academic writing mistakes;

6 (*satisfactory*) – a paper which does not reveal the research problem, an appropriate analysis is not done, there are big deficiencies in the analysis of the research problem, structural or methodological shortcomings and academic writing mistakes;

5 (*poor*) – a paper which has essential deficiencies in the analysis of the research problem, structural or methodological shortcomings and academic writing mistakes;

4 (*unsatisfactory*) – a paper does not satisfy minimal requirements.

## Used literature

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11. Taylor & Francis Online.

## Annexes

### Annex 1

**Mykolas Romeris University**  
**Faculty of Social Technologies**  
**Institute of Educational Sciences and Social Work** (14 pt, Bold)

**Name, surname of a student**  
**Social work Master level full/part time studies** (14 pt, Bold)

**Topic** (16 pt, Bold)

**Master thesis** (12 pt, Bold)

Supervisor: .....  
(*Scientific, pedagogical titles, name, surname*)(12 pt, Italic)

Vilnius, year

## **Content (14 pt, Bold)**

<b>Content (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>1. Section Title (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>
1.1 Subsection title (12 pt, regular)	p
1.2 Subsection title (12 pt, regular)	p
1.3 Subsection title (12 pt, regular)	p
<b>2. Section Title (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>
2.1 Subsection title (12 pt, regular)	p
2.2 Subsection title (12 pt, regular)	p
2.3 Subsection title (12 pt, regular)	p
<b>3. Section Title (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>
3.1 Research methods (12 pt, Regular)	p
3.2 Subsection title (12 pt, regular)	p
3.3 Subsection title (12 pt, regular)	p
<b>Conclusions (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Recommendations (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>List of references (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Santrauka (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Summary (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Annexes (12 pt, Bold)</b>	<b>p</b>

## **Examples of bibliography**

### **Book**

#### One author

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### Individual plan of Master thesis preparation

Date	Activities and tasks	Remarks
<b>Ist semester</b>		
September	The list of topics, supervisors and consultants are provided by the Committee.	
September 1 – 15	Students choose a topic on e-system.	The Committee announces a list of students with their topic, supervisor, consultant.
September 30	Students discuss the topic with the supervisor and decide on its final formulation.	The final topic formulation is registered on IS Studijos.
October 15	Students prepare an individual plan of Master thesis preparation, discuss it with the supervisor; the supervisor approves the plan.	Students agree on consultation time in advance or communicate with the supervisor via e-mail.
November – December	Students search for scientific literature, draft the theoretical part of their Master theses in consultation with the supervisor (at least once a month).	Students agree on consultation time in advance or communicate with the supervisor via e-mail.
January 10	Students finish the theoretical part and upload it on IS Studijos.	The supervisor assesses student's work by the end of exam session.
<b>IInd semester</b>		
February – May	Students prepare research methodology and collect data in consultation with the supervisor (at least once a month).	Students agree on consultation time in advance or communicate with the supervisor via e-mail.
June 10	Students finish the empirical part and upload it on IS Studijos.	The supervisor assesses student's work by the end of exam session.

<b>IIIrd semester</b>		
September – November	Students analyse data, revise the theoretical part in consultation with the supervisor (at least once a month).	Students agree on consultation time in advance or communicate with the supervisor via e-mail.
November 15	Students finish writing their Master thesis and provide it to the supervisor.	Students correct it according to supervisor's suggestions.
December 5	The final version of Master thesis with confirmation of independence of the written work is provided to the supervisor. Students register two bonded copies of Master thesis at the Institute of educational sciences and social work.	After the approval of the supervisor but not late than 10 days till the defence date, students upload their Master thesis on IS Studijos and the supervisor marks that allow to defend the thesis.
Two days till the defence date	A reviewer gives his written opinion.	A review is uploaded on IS Studijos.
First working days of January	Defence of Master thesis.	Assessment of Master thesis.

Form approved by Resolution No. 1SN-10 of the Senate of Mykolas Romeris University of 20 November 2012

### **Confirmation of Independence of the Written Work**

20 - -

Vilnius

I, Mykolas Romeris University (hereinafter referred to as the University),

---

*(Faculty/Institute, study programme)*

student \_\_\_\_\_,  
*(Name, surname)*

hereby confirm that this academic paper/Bachelor's/Master's final thesis

“ \_\_\_\_\_ ”:

1. Has been accomplished independently by me and in good faith;
2. Has never been submitted and defended in any other educational institution in Lithuania or abroad;
3. Is written in accordance with principles of academic writing and being familiar with methodological guidelines for academic papers.

I am aware of the fact that in case of breaching the principle of fair competition – plagiarism – a student can be expelled from the University for the gross breach of academic discipline.

---

*(Signature)*

---

*(Name, surname)*



**Indrašienė V., Jegelevičienė V., Merfeldaitė O., Pivorienė J.**

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*This guidebook will ensure Professional development of students, will help to monitor writing process of Master thesis. In the first part of the guidebook, Master thesis' supervisors and consultants will find analysis of main characteristics of individual consultations: notion, models and strategies, roles of consultants, structure of consultation process, time management. Recommendations for successful consultations, provided questions and tasks at the end of each chapter will help to organize individual students' work and to plan effective consultations.*

*The second part describes formal requirements, structure and process of Master thesis.*

Valdonė Indrašienė, Violeta Jegelevičienė, Odeta Merfeldaitė, Jolanta Pivorienė

## **INDIVIDUAL COUNSELING GUIDE**

Methodical recommendations

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